

E S ^K S A Y

ON THE

C H U R C H.

For my Brethren and Companions' sake, I will wish
thee Prosperity. Yea, because, of the House of the
Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.

PSALM cxxii.

G L O C E S T E R :

P R I N T E D B Y R. R A I K E S,

F O R G. G. J. A N D J. R O B I N S O N, P A T E R - N O S T E R - R O W ;

M E S S R S. R I V I N G T O N S, S T. P A U L ' S C H U R C H - Y A R D ;

A N D H. G A R D N E R, N O. 200, S T R A N D, L O N D O N.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.



P R E F A C E.

THE three great Subjects, with which a Christian Minister is concerned, are the Word of God, the Church of God, and the Christian Life. Circumstances and occasions will sometimes direct his thoughts to one of these, and sometimes to another: but so long as any of the three are before him, he is within the circle of his duty.

I was led to the subject of the following Essay, by an accident.

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I am

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I am a Curate in a country parish; who make it my business, and have found it my pleasure, to teach the children of my people, privately in my own house, and publickly in the Church; and I am, for the present, the only *Sunday Schoolmaster* of the place. In the course of my instructions, I had occasion to observe, that the Catechism of the Church of England, though a most excellent Summary of the Christian Doctrine, is deficient in one point, viz. *the Constitution of the Church of Christ*; the knowledge of which, in a certain degree, is necessary to the preservation of that *Charity* which is the *end of the Commandment*; and, for the want of which, so many are drawn away from the Church,

Church, who would certainly have remained with it, if they had known what it is. Yet is our Catechism not so deficient, but that it includes the grand distinction betwixt the *World* and the *Church*; which distinction being explained, I found we were possessed of a leading idea, which gave so much light to my young pupils, that I determined to go through the subject.

As I have been persuaded, ever since I began to think on these things, of the great importance of uniformity in worship amongst Christians: so have I been led to observe, on the other hand, the many evil consequences of Non-conformity, with the dangerous

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delusions of the mind, arising from the harangues of preachers pretending to extraordinary gifts, while they are but half learned in the Gospel, which they undertake to publish, and are greatly mistaken in the spirit of it. I see how some men are cheated with the appearance of being converted to godliness; when they are only converted from one sin to another; from loving the world, to hating their neighbours; from the coldness of Church devotion, to an uncharitable heat against the Church itself; from the moral philosophy of some of our pulpits, to the Antinomian Faith, which gives men a license to sin; from the drunkenness of the body, to the intoxication of the

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the mind, with spiritual pride and false doctrine.

I am well assured, that if this subject of the Church, now so much neglected, and almost forgotten by those who are most concerned to understand it, should come to be better considered; there would be more true piety, and more peace, more of those virtues which will be required in Heaven, and which must therefore be first learned upon earth.

Some amongst us err, because they *know not the Scriptures*; and others, because they never considered the nature of the Church. Some think they can make their
own

own religion, and so they despise the word of God, and fall into infidelity. Others think they can make their own Church, or even be a Church unto themselves; and so they fall into the delusions of Enthusiasm, or the uncharitableness of Schism. But, as there is nothing to enlighten the minds of men in the doctrines of salvation, but the word of God; so, is there nothing that can unite their hearts and affections, but the Church of God. *Ye are one bread, and one body*, saith the Apostle; one body by partaking of one bread; and that can only be in the same communion.

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In the weighing of these things, the prevailing spirit of the times, and the sanction which it may have given either to the profligate sinner, or to the presumptuous saint, are of no account upon the scale. In the settling of principles, we are never to consider how the world hath practised, but how God hath taught. The practice of the multitude, how great soever that multitude may be, hath no influence upon truth: yet it will stagger the minds of many, and carry them away, as with an overbearing torrent. Happy are they who have a better rule to direct them. They know that man *applauds*, *highly* applauds, what God *abominates*: and the higher the applause, the

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the more room there is for suspicion. They know that the voice of the multitude was against Jesus Christ, when but few were for him; and they had hid themselves, and dared not to speak their minds. When Noah followed the direction of God in building the Ark, for the saving of his house, the world was against him. To them no ark was necessary, because they had determined amongst themselves, that there would be no flood; and consequently, that Noah was a bigot, whose undertaking, while it exposed himself, was an invidious reflexion upon the age. When the father of the faithful followed the calling of God, there were none to stand by him and encourage

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rage him ; he was separated from his nearest relations ; and where-soever he went, he was under fears and dangers from people of a false persuasion. When Jesus Christ brought with him from Heaven, that Light which was to be the glory of his people ; one ruler of the Jews came to him by stealth in the night, to consult him as a teacher, come from God. So great was the authority of a blinded multitude, that a ruler of the people was afraid of being brought into disgrace, by conversing personally with the Saviour of the world !

The times, therefore, and the people who live in them are never to be considered by us, b when

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when we are seeking or following the truth, on the ground of its own proper evidence. When it was asked, with a design to perplex the people, who, *of the Rulers*, or *of the Pharisees*, had believed? Our Saviour gave them a different rule: why do ye not *of yourselves*, said he, *judge what is right*; without going first to consult those, who are blinded by false learning, and, with an appearance of great sanctity, have imposed upon the people? "See," saith one, "how fast our doctrine is increasing! all the learned are going after it; and you must all submit to it in a very short time." And who are they that thus reason with us? The very same persons, who declaim so loudly on the fallibility

lity of all men; and yet hold themselves to be little less than infallible in the choice of their own opinions. Let error rise as high as it can; and let truth sink as low as a wicked world can reduce it; the difference betwixt them is the same as ever; and we shall still find it wiser and better to follow the setting sun, as *Columbus* did when he discovered the Indies. The meteor of Heresy, which blazes, and dazzles us for a while with its appearance, will burn out, and leave not a spark behind; while the sun only sets to rise again. Such will be the fate of the Church, and of the doctrines of truth by which it is supported.

There never was a time from the beginning of the world, when there was not a party against the Church of God: and our Israel must have its enemies, as that Church had which came out of Egypt. In the first age of the Gospel, the Apostle St. *Jude*, spoke experimentally of those whom he then saw, or prophetically of those whom we should see, that they *go in the way of Cain*, and run after the *error of Balaam*, and perish in the *gainsaying of Corah*. If our governors were as cruel as *Pharaoh*, some would rejoice at it, and upbraid us with every disadvantage we might be under from hard usage; as a sign that the Church is a thing of no consequence, and that all those who belong to it are the vassals of the
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state. If the Church were as pure as *Abel*, the envy and jealousy of *Cain* would hate its offerings and sacrifices. If its order and œconomy were as perfect as in that Church which covered the face of the earth in its passage to *Canaan*, the self-interested spirit of the mercenary *Balaam*, would endeavour to bring a curse upon it, and blast its greatness. If its governors were as manifestly supported in their commission, as *Moses* and *Aaron*; the spiritual pride of *Corah*, would set up the holiness of the congregation against its priesthood, and the power of the people against the civil magistrate, who gives it protection. But none of these things ought to stagger or surprize a reader of the
Scrip-

Scripture: they are all to be expected: *these things were our examples*; and the Church would not be the Church of God, if there were none to rise up against it.

With these considerations in his mind, and not without them, a reader will be prepared to examine what I have written upon the Church. If any of our Dissenting brethren should look into this little piece, and find the matter so represented as to engage their attention; my prayer shall be with them, that God may give them the grace to cast out the bitter leaven of a party-spirit; to lay aside all temporal motives and interests, and consider the Church (as I have done) only so far as it is related

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related to the *other world*. To any particular or national Church, all temporal alliances are but momentary considerations, which pass away with the fashion of this world; and the Church may be either with them, or without them, as it was in the first ages: but the Church itself, under the relation it bears to Jesus Christ, abideth for ever.

ESSAY

...to the ...
...Church
...all temporal alliances ...
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...and the Church ...
...either with ... or without ...
...as it was in the first ages; but the
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it bears to Jesus Christ
of ever.

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E S S A Y
ON THE
C H U R C H.

C H A P. I.

OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE
WORLD AND THE CHURCH; WITH
THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF
BOTH SOCIETIES.

TWO things of a contrary nature
are best understood when they are
placed near to one another, or compared
together in the mind. The summer is
better understood, and more to be valued,
when we compare it with the winter; a
season in which so many comforts are
wanting, which the summer affords us.
The blessings of government are more ac-
ceptable, when compared with the miseries
of anarchy. We have the like advantage,
when we compare together the *church* and
the *world*, those two societies of which we
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are members : of the world by our natural birth ; of the church by our spiritual birth in baptism. When we are admitted into the Christian covenant, we renounce this world as a *wicked* world, and become members of the church, which is called the *holy* church. Both these societies are influential on those who belong to them ; the one corrupts, the other sanctifies : therefore it is of the last importance to mankind to consider and understand the difference between them.

If we ask, why the world is called wicked, we shall find it to be such from the nature and manners of its inhabitants ; for the world, as it means the system of the visible creation, can have no harm in it. There can be no wickedness, where there is no moral agency nor freedom of action.

From the sin of Adam, and the effects of his fall, the state of man by nature is a state of sin. The Scripture is so express in this, that it is not necessary to insist upon it. A disposition to evil comes into the
world

world with every man, and is as a seed, which brings forth its fruit throughout the course of his life. Many evil passions disturb and agitate his mind; and from the ignorance or darkness which prevails in him, he knows not that he is to resist them in order to his peace and happiness, nor hath he ability so to do, if he did know it. The worst and the most violent of all his passions is pride, which affects superiority, and delights in vain shew and pompous distinction; whether it be that of wealth, or honour, or wisdom. Covetousness disposes him to take all he can to himself, and pay no regard to the wants of others; whence the state of nature is a state of war, in which men plunder and destroy one another; not knowing the way of peace, which consists only with restraint, and must be taught them from above; *the way of peace have they not known*, saith the Scripture.

Man knows all things by education, but nothing by nature, except, as the Apostle saith, what *he knoweth naturally*

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as a brute beast. The world, as we see it now, is under the restraint of laws, which in some countries are better in themselves and better executed than in others : but if there were no laws and no governments to execute them, then we should see what a scene of destruction and misery this world would be, through the sinfulness of man's nature. Fraud, rapine, and cruelty, those three dreadful monsters make strange havock amongst us, notwithstanding the laws and regulations of society : what then would this world be without them ?

With respect to God, the state of man is a state of rebellion, alienation, and condemnation. His ways are so opposite to the will of God, that he is said to be *at enmity* with him. He has no alliance with his Maker, either as a child, a subject, or a servant ; but being under a general law of disobedience, can inherit nothing from God but wrath and punishment.

You will see this account verified by the plainest declarations of the Scripture.—

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First, as to the enmity of the world against God. *If the world hate you, saith our Lord when he came to save it, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* Secondly, as to their alienation or departure from all alliance with him—you *that were some time alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works*; saith St. Paul, Col. i. 21; and again, speaking of the natural state of the *Ephesians* before their conversion, he describes them as *aliens and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* In which passage, there is something farther than appears from the sound of the words; for when we read, *without God in the world*, the words, *in the world*, are emphatical, and denote this *wicked world*, such as we have been describing it, of which they that are members, must of course be without God, and without hope: they belong to a society which knows him not.

Then, thirdly, that the world is under condemnation; *we are chastened of the Lord*, saith St. Paul, *that we should not be*
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condemned with the world: whence it is evident, that the world, as such, is under condemnation, and can expect nothing of God but punishment for sin.

We are now prepared to take a review of this society called the world. It is composed of men lost by the fall; disposed to all manner of evil; ignorant of the way of peace; at enmity with God, and with one another; delighting themselves in the pride of appearance, and the vanity of distinction. In a word, *the whole world lieth in wickedness*, and they that are condemned for sin, will be condemned *with the world*, whose condemnation, therefore, is a thing of course. What human philosophy may say of this description of the world, we are not to regard: if it is the description which stands in the Holy Scripture, we are not to consider what men may say of it. A proud world will never be pleased to see an humiliating description of itself.

Such

Such then is the world, and such are we all, so far as we are members of it. God therefore of his infinite mercy takes us out of this wicked society, and *translates* us into another. He *delivers us from the power of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of his dear son*; and without this translation we are inevitably lost. You are here to observe, that the *kingdom of Christ* is one of the names of his *church*; and they that are in it, as it is distinguished from the world, are called *children of the kingdom*. Its nature is totally different from the kingdoms of this world (of which we shall see more hereafter) for as the world is called *wicked*, so the church is called *holy*, and all the holiness that can be in man, must be derived from thence. If we enquire how, and in what respects, the church is holy, we find it must be so from its relation to God. It is called the *church of God*, and he being holy, every thing that belongs to him must be so of course. And further, it is a society, or body, of which the Holy Spirit is the life; and this life being communicated to those

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who are taken into the church, they are thereby made partakers of an holy life, which is elsewhere called *the life of God*; from which life they are *alienated* who are out of this society. It is holy in its sacraments; our baptism is an holy baptism, from the Holy Spirit of God; the Lord's Supper is an holy sacrifice; the ordinance of absolution is for the forgiveness of past sin, that the members of the church may be recovered from sin to a state of holiness, and peace with God. The church is holy in its priesthood; all the offices of which are for the sanctification of the people.

The contrary nature of the two societies I have been speaking of, will now be better understood, when they are compared together. In the one, men are in a lost condition; in the other, they are in a state of salvation: for as the world is *alienated from God*, the church is in alliance and covenant with him, and partaker of his promises. As the world is under condemnation, the church is under grace and pardon of sin: its baptism washes away
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original sin, and gives a new birth to purity and righteousness; its other sacrament of the Lord's supper maintains that spiritual life which is begun at baptism, as meat and drink support the life we receive at our natural birth. As the world is *without hope*, the Christian hath *hope in death*, through the Resurrection of Christ, and is assured, that he who is united to the life of God, can never die: for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. While the wicked are to perish with the world which they inhabit, the children of God are *heirs with Christ of an eternal kingdom*.

The Church is also holy, when by the word Church, we understand the Building or place in which the people assemble to accomplish the Service of God. As the world, on the other hand, hath always had its unholy Places of Assembly, its theatre, its Idol Temples, &c. which un-sanctify and pollute those who frequent them. Under the Jewish State of the Church, the temple is called the *holy temple*,

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or *holy place*; (*Heb.*) and a part of it was called the *most holy place*. Our Saviour allows that the Temple *sanctified the gold*, which was offered in it, and consequently all other offerings and sacrifices there made. Now, if that temple was holy, whose glory was to be done away, certainly the place of Christian worship, called the church, must be holy also. For why was the Temple at Jerusalem holy, but because the presence of God attended it? And has he not promised to be in the midst of us? And must not our churches therefore be holy upon the same account? And are they not guilty of a great sin, who treat any church with irreverence? Much more if they despise or defile it? For it is said, *he that defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.*

But nothing will shew us the difference between the world and the church, so effectually, as when we consider who is at the head of each society. Christ is the *head of the church*, and the Devil is the *prince of this world*, who is also called the
God

God of this world. They who are in the church, are in the kingdom of Christ; which, though not *of* this world, as not deriving its power from thence, is yet *in* the world. They who are *of this world*, are in the kingdom of Satan, and under his power; as the heathens are said to have been before they were redeemed from it, and brought over to the kingdom of God: which translation was signified by the redemption of the Hebrews, from under the power of Pharaoh.

If we enquire into the respective characters of the head of the church, and the prince of this world, as they are described under a variety of names, the opposition is wonderful; and it will be found very instructive, because there is the same opposition betwixt the children of each.

The head of the Church is called *Jesus* the *Saviour*: the head of this world is a *destroyer*; in Hebrew, *Abaddon*; in Greek, *Apollyon*.

The one is the *true light*, that is, a spiritual light to the soul of man; the other is the *prince of darkness*.

The one is a *shepherd*, gathering the lambs with his arm, and feeding his flock; the other is a *lion* who goeth to and fro in the earth, *seeking whom he may devour*.

The one is a *lamb*; meek, innocent, and spotless: the other is a *serpent*; deceitful, subtile, and with poison under his lips.

The one is the physician of souls, who went about healing the sick, and raising the dead: the other is the inflicter of diseases, *bowing* men down with infirmities; *binding* them with the bonds of affliction; and was a *murderer from the beginning*; for he brought death into the world, by the temptation of man in Paradise. Men murder individuals; but Satan murders a whole world at once; and is the prince of murderers.

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The one delivers men who are under temptation to sin ; the other is the *tempter*, who leads them into it. And as the one is the *advocate* of sinners, interceding for them as their *priest* and *mediator* ; the other is the grand *accuser*, who is therefore called the *Devil*, which signifies an accuser.

And lastly, (for I think we need go no farther at present) the one is the *truth*, the other is a *lyar*, and the *father of lies*.

The like difference is found in the children of this world, and the children of the kingdom of God ; that is, between the *wicked world*, who are under the *power of Satan*, and the *Holy Church*, which is the *flock of Christ*, and takes him for its pattern. It cannot be otherwise ; the spirit of the head must be diffused through the members ; and you will see it to be true : first, with respect to the Holy Church of Christ ; whose disciples are taught to relieve one another in their wants, and save
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one another in their distress; rejoicing and suffering together, as the members of the same body; and doing good unto all men. His ministers are *shepherds*; his followers, from the first ages of Christianity, were *accounted* and treated as *sheep for the slaughter*, and were patient and unresisting. They exhort and encourage one another to good works, and being united together under a bond of peace, their *charity covereth a multitude of sins*; that is, it hideth and concealeth the many failings of their brethren for the love of Christ, instead of aggravating their offences, and judging them unmercifully. They are children of light, who derive the light of wisdom from the word of God; and walk openly and honestly, as in the day. In their conversation, they are true and faithful, and give you a direct answer, without disguise or subterfuge.

Such ought to be the members of the holy Church of Christ: this is the character intended for them, though many fall short of it, and some totally depart from it.

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But the visible church membership of men, does not depend upon their manners and opinions; nor indeed upon any thing they can do for themselves; because it is the gift of God, by his ministers; so that a man in a holy church may be an unholy man: for the kingdom of heaven, or church of Christ, is like a net cast into the sea, which gathers of every kind, both bad and good; and an effectual separation is never made between them, till the Angels drag this net to the shore, to gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. If we bear this case in mind, it will deliver us from a great deal of perplexity. It is truly a sorrowful fact, that the children of God, in too many instances, depart from their proper character: but the character proper to the world, is, in all respects, like that of Satan, wicked and miserable.

As the Devil is the prince of this world, his children set their affections upon it; and it is the main purpose of their lives to obtain and enjoy it at any rate. For
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this they sell their souls, and if they get the world in exchange, they think they are gainers by the bargain.

As he is the prince of darkness, so do they fall into ignorance, and blindness of heart, and love darkness rather than light, that their deeds may not be reprov'd. They hate the word of God, as owls and bats hate the day-light; and dispute fiercely for their errors, lest information and conviction should bring them to repentance.

As the Devil is a *destroyer*, so do the children of this world destroy one another. Their wise politics produce war and desolation; their error and delusion of mind stir them up to the persecution of the servants of God: and wherever we see oppression, and cruelty, and persecution, there we see the spirit of the Devil, the father of persecution, who, by violence, will terrify and compel, where he cannot persuade.

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As he is a serpent, so his children are a generation of vipers, double-tongued, and deceitful; smooth and flattering on some occasions, but waiting to give a deadly bite when they are offended and provoked. Their way is crooked and uncertain, like the path of a serpent. An honest man, whose path is direct and plain, can never tell what to make of them, because they pretend to be going one way, while they are going another; and they often gain their end by it; as the twistings of the serpent carry him to the point he aims at.

As Lucifer fell from Heaven for rebellion, all his children are impatient under authority; and in this capacity they are called *sons of Belial*; which means, that they can bear no superior. Patience, and obedience, and submission, are essential to the Christian character. Christ himself is our pattern, who allowed that the power of Pilate, so unjustly exercised, was *given him from above*, and submitted to his sentence, when he could have struck him

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dead upon his bench. But resistance is the Devil's doctrine, and the world's practice. The Gospel teaches us, that the things which are highly esteemed among men, are an abomination in the sight of God, and here we see it verified; nothing is more detestable to the God of peace, than the sin of rebellion; and nothing is more magnified and applauded by the children of this world; who have set what they call *the power of the people*, above the power of God Almighty. He ordains government, and kings are his ministers; but the people are told, that they have power to overthrow his ordinance, and judge his vicegerents.

As the Devil is a *tempter*, his children act under him in that capacity: most wicked men have a strange desire to make all others as wicked as themselves. The world is full of seducers, who tempt men to false principles, and immorality of life. Some get their livelihood by the corruption of other people; and most infidels and heretics are so diligent in spreading their

their opinions, that if the friends of truth were equally zealous, the world would not be able to stand against them.

As the Devil is the grand accuser, so doth the world delight itself in evil-speaking. Railing and slandering is their great amusement. Evil words are not pointed against evil things. The world delights to asperse those, who are unlike to themselves. There never was a good man, nor ever will be, who was not evil spoken of, and depreciated in the judgment of the public; and the rule is so universal, that our Saviour saith to all Christians, *Woe be unto you, when all men speak well of you.* False prophets were well spoken of by the people; and there must be something false and spurious, some *evil with the appearance of good**, in every popular character that pleases the world.

As the Devil is the father of lies, so all they that are of the Devil are liars, who

* Καλον κακον αν' αγαθοις.

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will never make a scruple of a lie to hurt others, or serve themselves. The whole Heathen religion was one great lie, in opposition to the truth of the Divine law. Much evil is threatened to those who put evil for good, and good for evil; who make the heart of the righteous sad, by predicting evil to them, and by promising happiness and prosperity to the wicked. Thus did they speak of old, who were called *false Prophets*; and it would be happy for us if there were none of them amongst us: but, wherever they are found, they are the ministers of Satan: and how fair and fine soever they may speak on some occasions, it is no proof of their goodness; for Satan is sometimes, as it serves his purpose, *transformed into an angel of light*, and affects an holy and heavenly character; and then he is most a Devil, because he can most deceive.

CHAP. II.

OF THE MEANS OF GRACE, AND THE
MARKS BY WHICH THE CHURCH OF
CHRIST IS TO BE KNOWN.

HAVING explained the nature of these two societies, the Holy Church, and the wicked World; we must consider the use of the Church, and the marks by which it is to be known. It is promised, *that he who believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.* But how shall we have this baptism, unless we have it from those whom God hath appointed to baptize? It is also promised, *he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life:* and how shall we receive the body and blood of Christ, but from the Church, to whom he said, when he instituted the Lord's supper, *Do this in remembrance of me.* This being the commemorative Sacrifice of the New Testament, it can be offered only by a priest; and

and all the world cannot make a priest. The Ministers of the Old Testament were ordained to their office by an immediate commission from God to Moses, the Mediator of that time betwixt God and the people. The Ministers of the New Testament were ordained by Christ himself; from whom the authority descended to others, and shall reach, through a variety of hands, to the *end of the world*.

This is the way God hath been pleased to take, to make men holy, and bring them to himself, through this dangerous world, as he brought Noah and his family out of the old world into the new, by means of an ark, which was a figure of his Church. It is therefore of infinite consequence, that we should be able to know, with certainty, whether we are in the Church or out of it. If we are out of it, we are *in the world*. If we had been out of the Ark, we should have been drowned. It is true, we may be in the church, and yet be lost; for was not Ham in the Ark,

who

who was a reprobate? But if we are out of the Church, how can we be saved?

I would not, for the whole world, unworthy as I am; I say, I would not, for the whole world, and all the kingdoms of it, be in doubt, whether I was *translated*, or not, into the *kingdom* of Jesus Christ. I would not be in doubt, whether I have the *Sacraments*, or whether I have them not. But how can I be sure in this case, unless I know *what* the kingdom of Christ is; *where* it is to be found; and what are the *marks* by which it may be known? Many strange abuses in religion have arisen on occasion, and under the specious name of, *the Reformation*; a very good word; but it hath been applied to a great many bad things, even to madness and blasphemy. We are fallen into times when some say, *lo, here is Christ*, or, *lo, there*; in the *desert*; or in the *secret chambers*; and are bid to take *heed that no man deceive us*. What a terrible case should we be in, if we had no sufficient warnings given to us, and no rule to go by! But as the lightning

ning which cometh from the East shineth unto the West, so plain and notorious was the establishment of Christ's kingdom in this world; together with the form of its constitution, and the orders of its ministry, in all the countries wherever it was planted. It would be unreasonable; indeed it would be lamentable; it would seem as if God had mocked us, contrary to the nature of his mercy, that he should publish a way of salvation, and leave it uncertain where it is to be found.

From what is said of it in the Gospel, it is impossible that the Church should be a society obscure and hard to be distinguished. *Ye are the light of the world,* said Christ to his Disciples, *a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.* Light is sure to shew itself; and it comes in strait lines, which direct us to its source. A city placed upon a mountain, is so elevated above other objects, that it cannot be difficult to find it; rather, it is impossible to miss it; *it cannot be hid:* and Christian people in all ages seem to have agreed, that

that it shall not be hid : for when we approach a city in any part of Christendom, the churches are generally first seen towering over all other buildings.

Christ hath given us a precept, that, under certain circumstances, we should *tell* our case to *the church* : but unless it be known what and where the church is, this cannot be done. The precept therefore supposes, that the Church must be known to us. The same must follow from the injunction of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews.—*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.* Chap xiii. 17. The Rulers of the Church must therefore be known to us ; for it is impossible we should do our duty, and submit ourselves to them, unless we are sure who they are.

The Church then, must, in its nature, be a society manifest to all men. Some may slight it, and despise it, and refuse

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to hear it; but they cannot do even this, unless they know where it is to be found.

When we enquire more particularly what the Church is, it may be best to proceed as we are obliged to do in some other cases; first, to learn what it is not; that we may go upon right ground, and understand with more certainty what it is.

The Church then, as a society, is not the work of man; nor can it possibly be so. I have laid the foundation of all my reasonings upon this subject, in the distinction betwixt the Church and the World, as two separate parties. The Church is so named *, because it is *called* or *chosen out of* the World. 'Till it is so called out of the world, it hath no being: but it cannot call itself, any more than a man can bring himself into the world.

Our Christian calling is as truly the work of God, and as much independent

* In Greek *Εκκλησία*.

of ourselves as our natural birth. The Church must have orders in it for the work of the ministry: but no man can ordain himself, neither can he (of himself) ordain another, because no man can give what he hath not. *How shall they preach, saith the Scripture, unless they be sent?* And again, *no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* Nay, even *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.* The Church must have *promises*; without which, it can have no reason or encouragement to act: but no man can give it those promises; which are *exceeding great and precious.* The Church must have *power*, without which it can do nothing to any effect: but there is *no power but of God.* It must have power to forgive sins; the *forgiveness of sins* in the Holy Catholic Church, being an article of the Apostles Creed: but *who can forgive sins, but God only?* It must act in the name of God, or not at all; because it acts for the salvation of man: but

no man can act in the name of God, but by God's appointment. No Ambassador ever sent himself, or took upon him to sign and seal treaties and covenants (such as the Sacraments of the Church are) without being sent; that is, without receiving authority so to do, from an higher power. The act would be so far from beneficial, that it would be treasonable. If an army were to raise itself without commissions, what would such an army be, but a company of banditti, leagued together to plunder and destroy the honest subjects of an established community?

Nothing therefore is plainer, on these considerations, than that the Church neither is, nor can be from man. It is no human institution; and as it acts under God, if it acts at all, it must act by his authority and appointment. It is properly called, the *Church of God*, (of the *living God*, in opposition to the profane societies, self-erected for the worship of dead Idols) and mankind might as reasonably presume to make God's World, as to make God's Church.

Farther

Farther enquiry will shew us, that the Church is no confused multitude of people, independent of one another, and subject to no common rules; but a regular society, like to other societies, in some respects, and unlike them all in others. It is called a *body*, a *family*, a *city*, a *kingdom*. a body is a regular structure, the limbs of which being joined together, are subordinate and subservient to one another, and are animated by the same soul or spirit. So saith the Apostle, *for by one spirit we are all baptized into one body.* 1 Cor. xii. 13. It being also called a *family*, the members of it must have some common *relation* to one another: being called a *city*, it must be *incorporated* under some common *laws*; and being a *kingdom*, it must have some form of *government* and magistracy. Families, cities, and kingdoms, are societies; and the Church, being represented by them, must be a regular society. But in this the Church differs from all other societies, because they belong to this world, and their rights and privileges are confined to it: whereas the Church extends to
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both worlds, the visible and the invisible, and is partly on earth, and partly in Heaven. In its earthly members it is visible; in its rulers, it is visible; in its worship, it is visible; in its sacraments, it is visible. But being also a spiritual society, it hath a *life* which is *hidden*, and in the inward and spiritual Grace of all its outward ordinances, it is invisible. As a kingdom in which God is Judge, and Christ is a Mediator, and Angels and Saints departed, are members; it takes in the heaven itself, and is the *heavenly Jerusalem*, which is the *mother of us all*; inasmuch, that when we are admitted into it, our *conversation is in Heaven*, and the Angels of Heaven are our *fellow-servants*; all making one great family under Jesus Christ, in whom *all things are gathered together in one, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth*: on which consideration, what is rightly done in the Church on earth, stands good in Heaven, as if it had been done there; and the Apostles of Christ received from him, the *keys of the kingdom of Heaven*, with a power of

of *binding* and *loosing*, which extends to Heaven itself : and when Christians go to Heaven, they are not carried into a new society, for they are already by the grace of God, translated into it by baptism ; whence the Apostle speaks of their translation, not as a thing expected, but even now brought to pass. He *hath translated us*, &c. Col. i. 13.

The Church doth also differ from other societies, in that it is Catholic or universal ; it extends to all places, and all times, and is not confined to the people of any nation, or condition of life, but takes in Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free ; and is therefore properly signified in one of our Saviour's parables by an *inn*, where all that offer themselves are accepted. The commission of Christ to his Apostles, was to *teach and baptize all nations*.

The Church being a kingdom, not of this world, is of a spiritual nature, and in
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that capacity it is invisible; but as a kingdom *in* this world, it is visible, and must have a visible administration. To know what this is, and whence its authority is derived, we must go back to the Gospel itself.

Jesus Christ was sent from Heaven by the Father, and invested with the glory of the Priesthood by an actual consecration, when the spirit descended upon him. As the Father hath sent him, *so did he send his Disciples*, and gave them authority to send others: so that the Church which followed, derived its authority from the Church which Christ first planted in the world; and the Church at this day must derive its authority after the same manner, by succession from the Church which went before; the line extending from Christ himself, to the end of the world: *lo, said he, I am with you always, unto the end of the world*: certainly, not with those very persons, who all soon died, but with those who should succeed, and be accounted

counted for the same; for a body corporate never dies, till its succession is extinct*.

Our Saviour at first ordained his twelve Apostles according to the number of the tribes of the Church of Israel. Afterwards he ordained other seventy, according to the number of the Elders, whom Moses appointed as his assistants. When the Church in Jerusalem was multiplied, seven Deacons were ordained, by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, to preach, and baptize, and minister, in distributing the alms of the Church. Here then, we have three orders of men, each distinct from the other; the twelve Apostles, the seventy Disciples, and the seven Deacons; and by these the first Christian

* Take away this succession, and the Clergy may as well be ordained by one person as another: a number of women may as well give them a divine commission;—but they are no more Priests of God, than those who pretend to make them so. If we had lost the Scriptures, it would be very well to make as good books as we could, and come as near them as possible: but then it would not only be folly, but presumption, to call them the word of God.” See the *second Letter* to the *Bishop of Bangor*: Postscript.

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Church

Church in Jerusalem was governed and administered. The Apostles were superior in office to the Disciples; because, when Judas fell from the Apostleship, one was chosen by lot out of the Disciples into the Apostleship: the Deacons were inferior to both; and it appears that they were appointed by the laying on of the hands of the twelve Apostles; for it is said, Acts vi. 2, "*the Twelve called the multitude of the Disciples unto them,*" &c. That the Apostles appointed others to succeed to their own order, is evident from the case of Timothy; who in the antient superscription, at the end of the second Epistle, is said to have been, *ordained the first Bishop of the Church of the Ephesians*. He is admonished to *lay hands suddenly on no man*; therefore he had power to ordain: and he is likewise admonished not to *receive an accusation against an Elder, (or Presbyter) but before two or three witnesses*: therefore he had a judicial authority over that order. Directions are given with respect to the Deacons of the same Church; therefore, in the first Church of the Ephesians

fians, there was a Bishop, with Elders and Deacons under him; as in the Church which began at Jerusalem, there was the order of the Apostles, of the Disciples, and of the Deacons. In the Christian Church, throughout the world, we find these three orders of Ministers for fifteen hundred years, without interruption. The fact therefore is undeniable, that the Church has been governed by Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, from the Apostles downwards; and where we find these orders of ministers duly appointed, the Word preached, and the Sacraments administered, there we find the Church of Christ, with its form, and its authority.

The wisdom of God is here very evident, in appointing the Orders of the Christian ministry after the pattern of the Jewish Church, which was of his own appointment so long before. That there might be no uncertainty in a case of such consequence to the souls of men, there was no novelty, but a continuation of the like administration with that which had all

along been known and acknowledged in the Church. *Aaron* was an *High Priest*, with a ministry peculiar to himself; under him there was an order of *Priests*, twenty-four in number, who served *by course* in the daily sacrifices and devotions of the Tabernacle and Temple; and these were assisted by the whole tribe of the *Levites*. As the law had its passover, its baptisms, its incense, its sacrifices, its consecrations, its benedictions, all to be realized under the Sacraments and Offerings of the Gospel; so its Ministry was but a pattern of the ministry which is now amongst us; and we cannot mistake the one, if we have an eye to the other; such is the goodness of God in directing and keeping us, through all the confusions of the latter days, by a rule of such great antiquity, to the way of truth, and keeping us in it.

The great use of the Church is to receive and minister to the salvation of those who are taken out of the world: but this it cannot do without the truth of the Christian Doctrine; the Church is therefore

fore as an instrument, or candlestick, for the holding and preserving of this sacred Light. It is called the *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*; not as if it had any right of making or imposing doctrines of its own; for the ground and the pillar do not make the roof, they only support it; nor doth the candlestick make the light, it only holds the light. And these similitudes will be found just, if we pursue them farther; for as when the pillars are removed, the building must fall; and when the lamp or the candlestick is broken, the light will be extinct; so if the Church be taken away, the Truth falls along with it; as we have seen, and do see, in this country. Our Quakers, who are farthest from the Church, are totally departed from the truth of Christian doctrine; and many of those separate congregations, who were Puritans and Believers in the last age, are Socinians and Infidels in this: a consideration which should prevail upon sincere people of all persuasions, who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, to lay aside their animosity,

mosity, and unite against the Socinians, who are the common enemies of all Christian people, and are now endeavouring to overthrow the Faith of our Creeds and Articles.

When we speak of the *use* of the Church, we should never forget the great benefit and information which arises from the *fasts* and *festivals* of the Church; (totally neglected by the Sectaries) by the course of which, the piety of Christians is directed to all the great subjects of the Gospel: some of which might otherwise never be revived in our thoughts during the whole year. But the Church spends its year with Jesus Christ, and follows him in faith, through all the great works of his Mediatorial Office, from his *Advent* to the sending down of the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*. On this ground, the Work of Mr. *Nelson* is of great value to all Christian families; and we have reason to hope it will never fall into disuse: though all persons, fanatically inclined, are very cold to the merits of it, and

and the Sectaries, it is to be supposed, must reject it on their own principles.

Here I must add, that the Wisdom of God is farther manifest, in appointing a provision for his Ministers, *independent of the people*. The maintenance of the Jewish Priesthood was from God; for the Tythes and Offerings, on which they lived, were first *dedicated* to God, and *from him* transferred for the support of his ministry. So doth he himself state the case by the Prophet: *Ye have robbed me*, saith he, *in Tythes and Offerings*; as if they were his own property: and so they were; for being dedicated to God, the first proprietor of all things, they belong to him before they belong to his Church. The wisdom and piety of Christian states followed the rule of the Scripture from the earliest times; and it still obtains in this country. And what would be the consequence if it were not so? While the minister depends only upon the God to whom he is accountable, he dares speak the truth: but where he is dependent on
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the people, and the people are corrupt; then he must accommodate himself to their fancy. For this reason, if the people of a congregation, who chuse their own Minister, fall into heresy, they rarely or never get out of it, because they will bear no teacher, but one who is of their own persuasion, and will flatter them in their errors.

I have nothing more to say upon the nature of the Church, but to shew the extent of its authority. Every society must have power over its own members, to *admit* or *exclude* as the case requires: it cannot otherwise subsist. The Church, from the days of the Apostles, always exercised the power of excommunicating notorious offenders, and of absolving and restoring true penitents. Excommunication is nothing but a reversing of baptism; and they who have authority to baptize, must have authority to excommunicate. The Church must also have authority in directing its own worship and services, as to time, place, ceremonies, *Let all things*

things be done decently and in order: but what is *decency*, and what is *order*, is not specified, and must be left to the discretion of the Rulers of the Church. The Church has no authority to ordain any thing contrary to the Law of God; nor doth the Law of God depend upon the authority of the Church. There are three sorts of things about which the Church is conversant; *good, bad, and indifferent*: the good oblige by their own nature; the bad cannot be enforced by any authority: therefore the authority of the Church must extend to things indifferent, that is to order and discipline, to circumstances of time, place, forms of worship, ceremonies, and such like: and to disobey because they are indifferent is to deny that God hath given power to his Church to regulate any one thing whatsoever.

Ought we not, on the foregoing considerations, to magnify the goodness and wisdom of God, who hath provided a Church for the reception of lost mankind, and given to it the light of truth, and

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the means of grace? No subject can be plainer than this of the nature and constitution of the Church: and the necessity of its ministry and ordinances to the salvation of man, and the preservation of truth, charity, peace, and godliness, is as clear as the Sun. What a blessed thing it would be for us, if all people could see this! What temptations, corruptions, tumults, and miseries, would it prevent amongst mankind! But, alas, they are ever ingenious in defeating the purposes of God for their own good. They have ways and expedients, not only of making themselves easy without the benefits of the Christian Church, but of actually casting them all off with a high hand, as needless, superstitious, dangerous, and even sinful, and anti-christian; not helps to salvation, but hindrances. How this matter is, and with what reasonings they deceive themselves; we shall discover with very little inquiry.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

THE ERRORS, WHICH TEMPT MEN TO
LEAVE THE CHURCH, AND MAKE
THEM EASY WHEN THEY ARE SEPA-
RATED FROM IT.

THE means of Grace, and the pro-
mises of God, being with his
Church, they who would be made par-
takers of them, must apply to the Church:
and who would not? Who would not will-
ingly flee from Sodom on fire to take re-
fuge in Zoar. When the storm is abroad,
the beasts have sense to fly to a place of
shelter: and as the wrath of God is de-
nounced against this world, men must be
enemies to themselves, if they refuse to be
delivered in the way which God hath ap-
pointed. But we know nothing of this
world, if we think all men are friends to
their own spiritual interest. Many will
rather have recourse to their own imagi-
nations: and when pride hath got pos-
session

session of them, they are above being directed.

The example of Naaman is very instructive on this part of our subject. When he was ordered to seek the cure of his leprosy, by washing seven times in Jordan, the proud Syrian refused to comply with the ceremony, because he could not see how it should have any effect. Nevertheless, when he had thought better of it, that ceremony, unaccountable and useless as it might seem to his carnal reason, cured him of his distemper. By the Church and its ordinances, every Christian is put to the same trial; whether he will submit to such things as reason cannot account for? Whether he will look for an effect, to which the cause is not adequate, without the interposition of an invisible power? The children of God are still exercised by this trial. Some accept the terms proposed; they believe the promises of God, and are saved. Of the rest, some do not see how they can be saved in this manner; and others spend their lives
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in vanity, and never think whether they can or cannot. Men are influenced by two principles totally opposite, *Sight* and *Faith*: the Christian walks by *faith* and not by *sight*; the disputer of this world believes nothing but what he sees, and so is incapable of the benefits of Christianity. It does not appear to him how power can come from Heaven, and be delivered down in succession by the imposition of hands: how water, which washes the body, can *wash away sins*; how bread can be made the vehicle of a spiritual life; so he lives and dies the dupe of a dead philosophy, which admits of nothing spiritual in a religion whose benefits are all of a spiritual kind.

From the nature of the Church, we see how necessary it is, that men should be taken into it out of this wicked world. We see how the promises of God are confined to the ordinances of the Church; and that there can be no assurance of salvation without them. If we reflect on these things, we cannot but consider it as
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an inestimable blessing, that God hath appointed such a plain and certain way of leading us through the means of Grace, to the hope of Glory. We may perhaps wonder *why* men should endeavour to deprive themselves of these benefits; and how Christian people, so called, can satisfy themselves under a causeless departure from the great Law of peace and charity. I will therefore proceed to shew how they deceive themselves. There are three false principles, which, if admitted, would supersede the necessity of any church.

The first of these is the doctrine of an absolute unconditional election to salvation. For if God, by a mere act of his sovereign will, and according to an irreversible decree, elects men to eternal salvation, without regard to conditions and circumstances; then no visible ordinances are necessary as means of grace; they are all superseded, and we are as safe without them as with them. This doctrine is so convenient to all the irregular classes
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of Christian people, who have cast off the Church and its authority; that it has been much insisted upon almost from the beginning of the Reformation; and has done infinite mischief. For he who is divided from his brethren, with this doctrine in his mind, is thereby confirmed and fortified in his errors. In vain shall we recommend the benefits of Church Communion to him, who is saved in consequence of a decree, made before the Church or the world had a being. God hath elected him, without any regard to outward ordinances; and so the want of those ordinances can never render his election of no effect. And supposing his doctrine to be true, who can deny the consequence? But the doctrine is false. Thus much of it is true; that, according to the Scripture, man is chosen, or *elected, out of the World*, by the free Grace of God, without any respect to his own works, (of which he can have none till he is called; being in the state of an unborn infant) and brought into God's Church, where he is in a state of salvation.

tion. But he may fall from this state, or be cast out of it by the authority which brought him into it, and forfeit all the privileges of his election; therefore the Apostle gives us this warning; *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*: and St. Peter bids us *give diligence to make our calling and election sure*. How can that be, if we are elected to salvation, by an irreverfible decree? We need take no pains to make that sure, which in its nature is irreverfible. Paul was a *vessel chosen of God*; and yet this fame Paul, fupposes it poffible for him to fall from the Grace of God, and become a *caffaway*. Election therefore, as it is fpoken of in the Scripture, hath been groffly mifunderftood: for there is no fuch thing there as any election of individuals to final falvation, independent of the ordinances of the Church. Election is an inward and fpiritual grace; but there is no fuch thing adminiftered to man without fome outward fign. A man might tell us that he is *ordained* to preach the Gofpel: but we know this can never be without the *lay-
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ing on of hands. He may tell us he is one of God's elect; and if the reality of his election were to depend upon his own report, how should we confute, him although he were guilty of all manner of wickedness? If we believe him on his own authority, we may be tempted to be as wicked as he is: and multitudes have by this doctrine, corrupted one another, and fallen into what is called *antinomianism*; a neglect of God's Commandments, as not necessary to those who are elected independent of works and sacraments. To secure us from all such delusions, God hath affixed some outward sign or pledge to all his inward gifts, to assure us of their reality, and prevent imposture. Therefore, where there is an inward calling, there is an outward calling with it; where there is regeneration, there is the Sacrament of Baptism; and the Gospel knows of no regeneration without it. I might shew how this doctrine of absolute election is dishonourable to God, and contrary to his most express declarations. How it encourages some to presumption,

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pride, and ungodly living * ; and how it drives others to despair and distraction †, who have not, nor can bring themselves to an assurance of their own personal election to the favor of God : but my business in this place is only to remark, how convenient this doctrine is to all those

* I remember a woman in a country parish, who used to boast much of her own *experiences*, and insult the people of the church as reprobates ; *goats* who were to be placed on the *left hand*, at the day of judgment ; while she and her party were the true elect, the *sheep* who were to be placed on the right hand. Such was the usual strain of her conversation. But after a time, I heard that this *elect lady* was gone off with the husband of another woman. She was a severe critic on the Clergyman of the parish, as one who had many Popish actions, because he made a practice of turning to the East when he repeated the Creed ; and though he was much attended to as a preacher, she said it all signified no more than the *barking of a dog*.

† When Dr. *Sparrow* was Bishop of Exeter, there rarely passed a day, without a note or notes brought to Priest, Vicar, or Reader, for the prayers of the congregation, for persons *troubled in mind*, or *possessed* ; which as some judicious persons conjectured, was occasioned by the frequent preaching up of the rigid *Predestination* doctrines in some places in that city.

Preface to the *View of the Times*.

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who do not come to God in the ordinary way of his institutions, nor can prove themselves to be members of his Church.

A second doctrine, on the ground of which men place themselves above the Church, is that of immediate inspiration. For if men are now receiving new direction from Heaven, and God speaks in them as he did in Moses, and the Prophets, and the Apostles, they have no need to consult either the Scriptures or the Church: for they are independent of both, and have an higher rule. This is the reason why no impression can ever be made upon a Quaker, by arguments from the Scripture. He answers, that the Scriptures (as applied by us who do not understand them) cannot be brought in evidence against him; because (to speak in the Quaker language) he has within himself the same spirit that gave forth the Scriptures; and the Revelation which is past, must give place to that which is present. Nothing blinds the eyes of men so effectually as pride; whence he who is vain enough to believe,

that he is under the direction of immediate inspiration, must believe many other strange things. Such people therefore never fail to despise the ministry and worship of the Church, and make light of all its institutions. The Apostles of Jesus Christ foreseeing by a true revelation, that there would be false pretensions to inspiration in the Christian Church, as there were false prophets among the people of the Jews, give us warning not to *believe every spirit*, (that is, not to believe all those who pretend to speak by the spirit) but to *try them* whether they speak by the spirit of *truth* or the spirit of *error*. There are many good rules to direct us on this occasion: but there is one which every body can understand. The spirit of truth is the spirit of love, and peace, and unity: the Spirit of error is the spirit of hatred, and contention, and discord. The former tends to unite men into one body; the latter sets them at variance, and divides them into parties. *Beloved, saith St. John, let us love one another; for every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

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He that loveth not, knoweth not God. When the great rule of Charity is broken, and men lay claim to the spirit of God while they have no title to it, then they are open to the delusions of evil spirits: and accordingly many have uttered hideous blasphemies, under a persuasion that they were speaking by the spirit of God. Some have proceeded so far as to personate God himself*. Certain it is, that the sect who have departed farthest from the Church and its ordinances, are the most forward in their pretensions to immediate inspiration; and even where this is pre-

* In the beginning of this century, there was a sect of *Camisat Quakers* in London, in whose assemblies persons of both sexes, particularly young girls, pretended to deliver prophecies, with strange screamings and distortions. One of these people, (horrible to relate) was seen to take another by the arm, and looking him broad in the face, said, *Do you not acknowledge me to be the eternal and unchangeable God?* To which the other, falling down and trembling, answered, *I do acknowledge thee, &c.* Many fine people from the court-end of the town, who would paid but little respect to the benediction of a Bishop, were seen bending their knees, for a blessing, to these frantic females. See *View of the Times*, Vol. 4. p. 235.

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tended to in a lesser degree, a contempt for the Church and its ministry, seldom or never fails to attend upon it in the same proportion *.

A third doctrine which makes the Church of no effect, is the sufficiency of *moral virtue*; and a perilous doctrine it is. It comes forward with a more sober face, but it hath less of the Gospel than of Enthusiasm or Predestination. For on this ground, a man need be of no Church, of no sect, nor even a Christian believer; because moral honesty, which forbears theiving and cheating, may be found in a Turk or an Heathen. When people would appear to be what they are not, and endeavour to supply their defects by fine words and plausible pretences, we call them hypocrites: and I will assure the Reader, there is a great deal of cant in the

* The author of the *Snake in the Grass* prefixed a most excellent Preface to that work, on the Enthusiasm of *Antonia Bourignon*; shewing the original and tendency of hers and every other delusion of the same kind: which preface the Reader will do well to consult.

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world, beside that of fanaticism and affected devotion. Impiety can act the hypocrite upon occasion, and magnify moral virtue when it is set in opposition to the love of God. It is not unusual for persons to praise a man's character; not because they love his virtues, but because they hate his rival. So do some bad men praise morality, because they hate devotion. This is too frequently the case with those who make a false estimate of what they call a *good life*; leaving out the duties most essential to the life of a good Christian; and these are a very large party. Heresy and schism, till they turn into profligacy, never fail to descant upon the sufficiency of moral duties; and in this they are joined by the whole tribe of Deists, Infidels, and moral Philosophers, who are glad to hear of a rule of morality, (such, by the way, as themselves are to define and determine) which will serve them as a substitute for the Christian life, and all the forms of Church devotion. Here also we find those Christians, who live in the habitual neglect of the means
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of grace. I have heard people who never were at the Altar, and perhaps never intended it, comforting themselves with this consideration, that they never did any *harm* to any body: when they should rather have asked themselves, what *good* they ever did to themselves, or to any body else, for the *love of God*? Without which, all the virtues of man are nothing; and if he places any dependance upon them, they are worse than nothing. If a man is to be saved by the Christian religion, he must be a Christian in his life: but simple morality is not Christianity: it has neither *faith, hope, charity, prayer, fasting, nor alms*, which are the Duties of the Christian life. If we mean to serve God, we must serve him in his Church, and conform to its ordinances. If we do good to our neighbours, we must do it on a principle of faith; and a cup of cold water given on this principle, is of more value in the sight of God, than all the treasures of the Indies, if they are distributed from the proud heart of unbelief: and he is certainly in unbelief, who

who doth not direct himself by the rules, and act upon the principles, which God hath delivered to the Church.

Nearly related to the sufficiency of moral virtue, is the principle of *sincerity*, which was set up in the last age, as sufficient of itself to justify man in the sight of God, independent of the authority and benefits of his Church: so that if a man be not a *hypocrite*, it matters not what religion he is of. If sincerity, *as such*, independant of any particular way of worship can recommend man to the favour of God, then there can be no difference as to merit between a sincere Martyr, and a sincere Persecutor; and he that burns a Christian, if he be but in earnest, hath the same title to God's favour, as he that is burnt for believing in Jesus Christ. This position, (in the sense of it) absurd and monstrous as it must appear, was the support of a controversy in this kingdom, in which a Bishop led the way*, and was

* Thus did the famous Bishop *Hoadly* comfort all the Sectaries and Enthusiasts of his time "When you are

followed and applauded by all the libertines and loose thinkers of the nation, who foresaw that the argument would end in the dissolution of the Church as a society: and therefore they made him a thousand compliments.

If we consider how the mind of man is influenced by custom and education, and that his conscience and self-approbation will be according to his principles; then we shall see that sincerity, if admitted, would sanctify all the wickedness under Heaven. St. Paul, as a zealous Jew,

secure of your integrity before God—this will lead you not to be afraid of the terrors of men, or the vain words of regular and uninterrupted succession, authoritative benedictions, excommunications—nullity or validity of ordinances to the people on account of niceties and trifles, or any other the like dreams." I can venture to say, there never was a cause more effectually battled and exposed upon earth, than this of Bishop Hoadley, against the Church, and Church Communion, in the *Two Letters*, and the *Reply* of Mr. William Law, which every Clergyman of the Church of England ought to read, that he may know what ground he stands upon, and against what enemies he may be called forth to maintain it.

verily

verily thought (that is, he was *sincerely of opinion*) that he *ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*; so he persecuted the Christians furiously, and *breathed out threatnings and slaughter*. Now, as he had a good meaning in all he did, to what end was he converted, when his sincerity would have saved him in his former way? After his mind was better enlightened, he pronounced himself to have been the *greatest of sinners*, for what he had done in the *sincerity of his heart*.

Thus it would be in all other cases; he that acts sincerely upon bad principles, must be a bad man: a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit: and, *not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*. Upon the whole, he that will be saved, must be saved in the way which God hath appointed, and not in any way of his own. We shall be judged at last according to God's word, not according to any persuasions we may have taken up, through the prejudices of education, or the perverseness of our

own hearts; all of which are indeed no better than dreams, having no foundation but on that loose bottom of human imagination, on which are built all the visions of the night, and all the heresies in the world.

If these doctrines of *absolute election*, *immediate inspiration*, the sufficiency of *moral virtue*, and justification from *sincerity*, were true; it would follow, that God is unwise, inconsistent and improvident. For if he appoints a visible Church and its ordinances, as necessary to make us members of the kingdom of Heaven; and if he began the way of salvation by *adding to the Church such as were to be saved*; and yet, with all this, has another *private* way of saving men, by a *secret decree* which has no regard to any outward means; he is inconsistent in ordaining them. And also, as the doctrine of *immediate Inspiration*, or *new Revelation*, without any signs or credentials from Heaven, opens a way to every possible delusion of the mind, either from its own
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vain conceits, or the suggestions of evil spirits; God must be improvident, in not securing us against such dangerous impositions, which may introduce all kinds of wickedness into the world, under the sanction of a divine authority: an impostor having nothing to do, but to persuade himself, as any madman may do, that he acts by immediate inspiration. With this persuasion, men have butchered one another to make bloody baptisms; have set themselves up as Kings and Rulers of the new Jerusalem; have taken plurality of wives, and blasphemously personated God himself*. All the disorders of the last century were committed by fanatics, who assumed a privilege of seeking the Lord, and consulting, and receiving answers from him; while their minds were bent upon the most horrible crimes of Rebellion, Robbery, Sacrilege, Persecution, and Murder.

Then as to *moral virtue*; if that can *save* those who are *not added to the Church*,

* See *Rosi's View of all Religions*; particularly the Account of the Anabaptists of Germany.

it must follow, that man never was lost, and that Christ need not have come into the World. If *sincerity* in any persuasion, good or bad, will recommend us to the favor of God; then will lies, if we do but *believe* them, answer all the purposes of *truth*: then is there no difference between good and evil; and it cannot be worth while to convert Jews, Turks, or Heathens, to the Gospel, because they are as safe in their own way. Such are the pleas, by which some men of necessity, and some of malignity, seek to justify themselves, when they leave the Church, or despise, or neglect its ordinances. But *the foundation of God standeth sure.*

After what hath been said, few words will be wanting to convince any thinking person of the dangers and evil consequences which must attend the sin of causeless separation.

If men for salvation are brought out of the World into the Church, they cannot possibly forsake it, without hazard to their
salvation

salvation. If the promises of God, and the means of grace are committed to the Church, we lose them when we leave the Church: at least it will be very hard to prove that we carry them away with us: and who would chuse to be under any uncertainty in a case of such importance?

Another evil is that of breaking the great rule of charity in our worship. We are commanded to glorify God with *one mind and one mouth* and all to *speak the same thing*. How contrary to this is the practice of following different ways of worship, some totally disagreeing with others; and some not deserving the name of any worship at all; for in some of our assemblies, people meet for no purpose but to hear one another talk. There is no praying, no confession of Sins, no Absolution, no Thanksgiving, no Litany, no Sacraments! We read, that the Apostles, when the Holy Ghost descended, were *all with one accord in one place*; and so ought Christians to be, if they would preserve the presence of the spirit

spirit amongst them, who is the spirit of unity. And as the spirit of unity in worship, disposes men to a more peaceable and charitable temper; so the spirit of division and fanaticism is attended with violence and bitterness of language, and an intolerant persecuting humour toward all who are not fanatics; especially toward the members of the Church of England, which is deservedly placed at the head of the Protestant reformation *.

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* An author who put out a *Syllabus of Lectures*, in the year 1778, on the *Principles of Non-conformity*, speaks in the person of Jesus Christ, upon the tribunal of judgment at the last day, and supposes him presenting to the world on that tremendous occasion, his *faithful servants*, the Non-conformist ministers, as the great objects of his favour; and at the same time sending off those *holy tyrants*, the Bishops of the Church of England, into everlasting fire, with that dreadful sentence—DEPART! And what are they to be damned for? Because they could not approve of *Non-conformity*! a religion of *negatives*! They saw enough of its fruits to dislike it in former times, from its first appearance in this kindom: but they did not see, as we do now, that its end is *infidelity*: to which it hath been tending for many years past, and hath now attained it in the writings of Dr. Priestley, and the Unitarian Association. These Lectures, with this dreadful sentence of damnation to the
Bishops,

There is also great hazard of losing the the *doctrines* when we leave the *worship* of

Bishops, by *Brother Robinson*, were approved by the *Easter Association of Essex*, at *Harlow*, and recommended to the *Sister-Churches* by *order of all*. June 18, 1778. Of what character must these *Sister-Churches* be, if they are of the same *spirit* with *Brother Robinson*? Surely they are not *chaste virgins*, presentable to a meek and merciful Saviour, who prayed for his murderers; but unmerciful harlots, cursing and damning the established Church for retaining Episcopacy. Had there been no Non-conformity, the poor Bishops might have escaped like other men, and have been entitled to their chance of mercy, through the merits of their Redeemer, who died for them, and for all men, and sent forth the first Bishops by his own immediate authority. What would such Non-conformists do, if they had it in their power, who are provoked to such uncharitable ravings under the present most mild and moderate state of the Church of England?

But the most superlative instance of fanatic malignity I ever yet saw, is to be found in the works of *Milton*, whose malignity was rendered more malignant by the depressed and afflicted condition to which the Church was then reduced. He was a man of a bright and perfect imagination, and gifted with a wonderful choice of beautiful and descriptive expression. But the weapon is the worse for its sharpness, when malice hath the handling of it: and imagination is a mirror which can

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reflect

of the Church. When the ten Tribes revolted from the worship at Jerusalem, they soon lost the truth of their law, and fell into an idolatrous worshipping of the Calves they had set up in Dan and Bethel. Their government was troubled with great disorders, and their confusion ended in their utter dispersion. When men leave

reflect the fires of Hell as well as the lights of Heaven; of which, I think, we have an example in the following invective against the Bishops of the Church of England:

‘ But they—that by the impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God grant them!) shall be thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulph of Hell; where under the despiteful control, the trample and spurn of all the other damned, who, in the anguish of their torture, shall have no other ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them, as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight for ever, the basest, the lowermost the most dejected, most underfoot, and down trodden vassals of perdition.’ Conclusion of *Milton’s Treatise on Reformation*: Vol. I. p. 274. If it were put to my option, whether I would be an Ideot, without a single faculty of mind, or a single sense of the body; or whether I would have *Milton’s* imagination, attended with this fiery spirit of fanaticism; I should not hesitate one moment to determine.

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the worship of the Church, it is very natural for them to become disaffected to its doctrines: and they, who hate the Christian Faith, will take part with those who are against the Church; because they foresee, that if the Church be destroyed, the faith will be lost; as the light goes out when the lamp is broken. One of the most blasphemous books that ever was written in this country against the Christian *Faith*, was all of it apparently directed against the *Church*: on which consideration, many, who then believed the Christian doctrines, were drawn in by a disaffection to the Church, to take part with an infidel.

2. I am to remark farther, that with those who are ignorant and ill-instructed in the nature and use of the Church, there is a perverse prejudice in favour of *preaching*; and consequently a shocking neglect of those duties which belong to the people. It is a fine easy way for people with itching ears, to hear a preacher talk them into Heaven; while they neglect all the more

essential parts of divine worship. Many hear a Sermon with the same vain curiosity as people hear a speech upon a stage, and consult nothing but their own amusement. And while the whole of the ministerial duty is supposed to consist in preaching, a man, who can bawl and rant, is tempted to take himself for a minister of Jesus Christ, without any regular mission; of which sort we have multitudes in this kingdom at this time: and it is to be feared they are increasing. It is no uncommon thing for persons of all persuasions to meet in the same Church to hear the same preacher; many of whom have no communion with one another at any other time: how is a preacher to please such a mixt multitude of hearers, but by leaving the Church of Christ out of the question, and preaching a loose sort of Christianity, which will fit them all? Perhaps, if he were to speak the plain truth, and, from a sincere regard to their souls, give them such information as they stand most in need of, many of them would leave him with indignation: as
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there were those who would *walk no longer* with Jesus Christ, because they were not able to bear the things that were spoken by him. There is a fashion of inviting people to *come to Christ*, without telling them where and how he is to be found. Besides, it is a great mistake to suppose, that the whole of religion consists in our taking of Christ; it is beginning at the wrong end: for Christ is to take us, as he took the little children in his arms and gave them his blessing*. He said to his disciples, *ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*. There is a covenant between us and God, into which God, of his infinite grace, takes us; we do not take him, neither can we: and this con-

* Mr. Locke, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (a strange piece of divinity) is in the same mistake. He makes baptism a *visible act*, whereby those, who believed Christ to be the Messiah, *received him* as their king. So again in the same style, he says, that by baptism men *enroll themselves* in the kingdom of Jesus; which is but to say in other words, that they *write their own names* in Heaven. From such language as this, it is too apparent, that Mr. Locke's Ideas of the Christian Priesthood and Sacraments, were exceedingly low.

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finer us to the ordinances of the Church, which are not of us, but are the gifts of God's free grace to us miserable sinners : and Christians are united to God, and to one another, by the services of prayer, and the participation of the sacraments, more than by the hearing of the word of God without them ; which many hear for reasons of vanity and uncharitableness. Who are the best friends every minister hath in his parish ? They who attend the prayers and sacraments with him ; who are edified by his *priesthood* as well as by his *preaching* ; and are active in the great work of their own salvation.

3. As the latter times of the Jewish Church were very corrupt, and the doctrines of God were rendered of none effect by the inventions of men : it is agreeable to the prophecies of the New Testament, that *offences must come amongst us ; that men must arise, out of the Church, speaking perverse things, to draw away Disciples after them : also that many will not endure sound doctrine, but heap up to themselves teachers*

teachers (of their own appointing) *having itching ears.*

These and many other like passages give us notice, that there must be a falling off from the faith, with confusion and disagreement in the Christian society. If we look at our own Church, we have but a melancholy prospect; and cannot help observing, that it approaches too near to the state of the Jewish Church before its destruction. As they had corrupted the doctrines of Moses and the Prophets, and in consequence of it were divided into sects (for as truth unites, error always divides men) so have we corrupted the doctrines of the Gospel, and are miserably divided in consequence of it. I could name *some doctrines*, which if our Saviour were now to deliver in the metropolis of London, with the same freedom and authority as he did at Jerusalem, I verily believe he would be persecuted and put to death by people *called Christians*, as he was of old by those who were *called Jews.*

Jews. The Church of Jerusalem was infested with temporising and philosophising Jews, who were farthest of all others from the faith, while they affected to be wiser than all the rest of the people. The *Sadducees* believed neither Angel nor Spirit, and said there was no Resurrection. The *Herodians* were politicians and men of the world, who flattered Herod that he was the Messiah. The *Pharisees* were a proud sanctified sect, very godly in outward shew, but full of hypocrisy within. They justified themselves and despised others, as not good enough to stand near them, or belong to the same Church with them. Of the sect of the *Essenes*, we have no particular account in the New Testament; but from all we can learn, I take them to have been the Quakers of that time, who had thrown off all external rites of worship, and affected a religion perfectly pure and philosophical. The Sadducees were the Socinians of Judaism; who had nothing spiritual belonging to them, and had reduced their law to an empty form.

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The venality and avarice of the Jews of our Saviour's time, were notorious, and provoked his indignation. Their temple, filled with buyers and sellers, was turned into a den of thieves: and, God knows, there is too much of a worldly traffick amongst us; which is too far gone to be reformed, and too bold to be censured—*venduntur omnia* *!

4. But whatever abuses there may be in the Church, it is our duty to make the best of it. The Church is our spiritual *mother*; and we may apply those words of the wise man, *despise not thy mother when she is old*; not even if she should be in rags and dotage. The doctrine of the Church of England is, by profession,

• “ CHURCH LIVING. ”

“ Two thousand pounds ready for the next Presentation to a Rectory of adequate value, with immediate resignation.—The Advertiser is sixty-five years of age. Apply to Mr. ———, Attorney, Holborn.”

Perjury, which is now in a very growing state, may, in time, come to market with as much boldness as her sister *Simony* hath done for many years past.

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still pure and apostolical ; and, whatever faults it may have contracted, it cannot be worse than the Church which our Saviour found in Jerusalem : yet he still recommended to the congregation, the duty of obedience to their spiritual Rulers. *The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* Bad as the Church then was, our Saviour never forsook it, but *taught daily in the Temple* ; and his Apostles attended upon its worship at the hours of prayer ; and probably continued so to do, till they were dispersed. Neither Christ nor his Disciples ever considered the doctrines of Church-authority, and Succession, and Conformity, as *vain words and idle dreams*, as our Socinians have done of late years ; and after what hath been said, their views want no explanation.

5. In our behaviour toward those who have departed from us, let not us, who honour the Church, fall into the error of those who despise it. Let us not betray
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any symptoms of pride in censuring with severity, but rather, with hearts full of sorrow and compassion, lament the differences and divisions which expose the Christian Religion to the scorn of its enemies. Infidels are delighted to see that Christians cannot understand one another; for thence they are ready to report, that there is no sense amongst them all, nor any reason in their religion; for that, if there were, they would agree about it. In this also the Papists triumph; they boast of their advantage over the Reformed, in that they are preserved in peace and unity, while we are torn to pieces with factions and divisions. Hence they reflect upon the whole reformation, as a natural source of confusion; that they belong to *Jerusalem*, and we to *Babel*; that when we leave their Church, the city upon the hill, we never know where to stop, till we get to the bottom: that is, till we have run either into the madness of Enthusiasm, or the profaneness of Infidelity. How shall we stop this wide mouth of scandal, while appearances are

so much against us? However, this reproach doth not reach us of the Church of England; who, in doctrine and profession, are where we were two hundred years ago. Let those who have left us, try if they can answer the Papists upon this head: it is their business to account for the confusion which they only have introduced.

If the Clergy of this Church have any desire to preserve it, they must consider for what end the Church is appointed. A Christian Church is a candlestick, to hold forth the Light of the Gospel. When it ceases to answer that end, it is of no use as a Church; and the world may do as well without it. Great things have been attributed of late times to moral preaching: but there is no such thing as telling people what they are to *do*, without telling them what they are to *believe*; because the *Christian morality* is built upon the *Christian faith*, and is totally different from the morality of Heathens. *Deism*, so called, is a *Religion without Christianity*;
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it has neither the Father, the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, into whose name Christians are baptised. It has no Sacraments, no Redemption, no Attonement, no Church Communion, and consequently no Charity; for Charity is the love and unity of Christians as such. *Natural Religion* is but another name for *Deism*; it is the same thing in all respects; and I may challenge all the philosophers in Europe to shew the difference. Therefore, to recommend moral duties on the ground of natural Religion, is to preach *Deism* from a pulpit: and we should ask ourselves, whether God, who upholds his Church, to declare salvation by Jesus Christ alone, will preserve a Church, when it has left the Gospel, and holds forth the light of *Deism* in the candlestick which was made, and is supported in the world, only to hold forth the light of Christianity? What else is it that hath made way for the Enthusiastic rant of the Tabernacle? When the wise forsake the Gospel, then is the time for the un-wise to take it up; but with such a mixture of error and in-
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discretion, as gives the world a pretence for never returning to it any more: and then the case is desperate.

‘*Deism, properly so called,*’ (saith a certain writer) ‘*is the religion essential to man, the true original Religion of reason and nature.*—It is in Deism, properly so called, that our more discerning and rational divines have constantly placed the alone excellency and true Glory of the Christian institution.—*The Gospel* (says Dr. Sherlock) *was a Republication of the Law of Nature, and its precepts declarative of that original Religion, which was as old as the creation.*—*If natural Religion*’ (says Mr. Chandler) ‘*be not a part of the Religion of Christ, ’tis scarce worth while to enquire at all, what his religion is: from whence it seems very natural to infer, that the other parts of the Religion of Christ, are scarce worth any thing at all of our notice.*’ [*Deism fairly stated by a moral Philosopher: p. 5, 6, 7.*] See the whole Book, which proceeds on this principle; that natural Religion being admitted,

admitted, it must be a perfect scheme, a compleat structure; and that Christianity, as a superstructure, is unnecessary: and it is lamentable to see what advantage this author takes of the unguarded concessions, some celebrated Christian preachers and controversialists of the Church of England, who did not foresee, or did not consider, the consequences of their doctrines.

The Bishop of Landaff's Collection of Tracts, in six volumes, opens with the Theological Lectures of Dr. Taylor, of *Norwich*, a *Dissenting Teacher*; which shews his Lordship's great candour toward that party. In the first Chapter of which Lectures, I find a rule of interpretation repugnant to the rule given us by the Scripture itself, which directs us to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, that is, to compare the Scripture with the Scripture, that we may keep to the true sense of it. But here it is laid down as a fundamental rule, that we should always interpret the Scripture, in a sense *consistent*
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with the laws of natural Religion ; for that the law of nature, as it is founded in the unchangeable nature of things, must be the basis and ground-work of every constitution of Religion, which God hath erected.*

Now, with all due deference to his Lordship's judgment in collecting properly for the Edification of the Clergy, and the people committed to their charge; this rule of Dr. *Taylor* pre-judges the Scripture before we come to it; and inculcates into in-experienced Students of Divinity, the very principle that hath ruined us, and given us up as a prey to the Deists ; it allows them the advantage they have contended for against the peculiar doctrines of Revelation, as *scarce worth any thing at all of our notice, in comparison of natural Religion.* For here, I say, before we descend to the Scripture, we are possessed of a system, founded in the unchangeable nature of things ; from which, whatsoever the Bible may seem to reveal, we are never to depart. Let us

* See Theolog. Tracts, vol. i. p. 5.

then

then suppose, that our Christian Baptism teaches us to believe in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: What have we to do? Natural Religion hath already determined, from *the unchangeable nature of things*, that God is but *one person* *. Therefore we must *interpret* the form of Baptism to *such a sense*, as will still leave this doctrine of *nature* in possession; either by teaching that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are, in reality, but *one person*; or that Jesus Christ is no person in the Godhead, but a *mere man, like ourselves*; or, that Christianity is not true, &c. So in like manner, by another anticipation, natural Religion makes every man his own Priest and his own Temple: therefore it cannot possibly admit the true and proper Priesthood of Jesus Christ; but must reject the whole doctrine of atonement, and the corruption of man's nature; for this is incompatible with the

* "This, (says Dr. Clarke) is the *first principle* of "Natural Religion." See Mr. Jones's *Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*; p. 15, of the sixth Edition; where this is considered more at large.

idea of a natural Religion; inasmuch as corrupt nature must produce a corrupt Religion. If we say that nature is not corrupt, we overturn the foundations of the Gospel; which teaches us, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them.*—Man, it seems, is so far from *knowing* the spiritual things revealed to him in the Scripture, that, as he now is *by nature*, he is not in a condition to *receive* them (they will be *foolishness* to him) till he is enabled so to do by a new faculty of *discernment*, which is supernatural and *spiritual*. It is therefore easy to foresee what must be the consequence, when Dr. Taylor's Rule is admitted; and the younger Clergy of this Church, *presented* (as I hear some of them are) with a Copy of his Lordship's Collection, study Divinity upon this ground. They will take the doctrines of nature, and work them up with the doctrines of the Scripture: that is, they will throw natural Religion into the Scripture, as Aaron threw the gold of Egypt into the fire: and, what will *come out*? Not the
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Christian Religion, but the philosophical
calf of Socinus.

Mr. *Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity* may be read with safety, by those who are already well learned in the Scripture : but if I had been of his Lordship's counsel, I should have thought it my duty to remonstrate against the admission of it into such a collection. For what a perilous situation must that poor young man be in, who, perhaps, when he can but just construe the Greek Testament, or before, is turned over to be handled and tutored by his renowned Veteran ; who, with a shew of *reasonableness*, and some occasional sneers at Orthodoxy, and affecting the piety and power of inspiration itself, has partly overlooked, and partly explained away, the first and greatest principles of Christianity, and reduced it to a single proposition, consistent with Heresy, Schism, Calvinism, Arianism, Socinianism, and Quakerism.

His Lordship hath introduced many other Tracts of the Dissenters, besides the Lectures of Dr. *Taylor*, for the use of the Clergy of the Church of England; and gives such a reason for it, as hath a very fair and liberal appearance. But in order to make a right estimate of this measure, and prove it in the balance of truth and equity, let us change the scales. Let us suppose, that some Doctor in a *Dissenting*, or peradventure (for such it may be in this age) a *Socinian* Academy, had compiled a miscellaneous book for the use of the students, and had opened his collection with a course of institution by some true and zealous Divine of the Church of England; I rather think the party would consider him as a suspicious character; who, under the mask of Candour and Liberality, was slyly endeavouring to bring them all round about to Orthodoxy and Uniformity.

C H A P. IV.

ON THE ABUSE OF THE REFORMATION, &c.

TO the *Doctrines* which are pleaded in defence of separation, I might have added the use which has been made of the *historical event* of our Reformation from the Errors of the Church of Rome. Here the Dissenters are in confederacy with the Papists against us. The Papists object, that by the *fact* of our separation from their Church, the *principle* of separation is admitted; and being once admitted, it will multiply sects and divisions amongst us, and justify them all, as much as it justifies us. This is the very argument, which the Dissenters have repeated an hundred times; and they borrowed it originally from Rome, whose Emissaries were detected among the Puritans in the days of Elizabeth, feeding them with
reasons

reasons and objections for the multiplying of schism, and the weakening of the Episcopal Church of England: and God knows, they succeeded but too well. However, the link which unites these two parties, may easily be broken. They both agree, that the Reformation of the Church of England was a *Separation* from the Church of Rome, of the same kind, and on the same principles, with the separation of our Dissenters. But to say this, is to assert, that the Pope had a *legal* authority over the Church of England; when in fact it was an usurped authority; and the Church of England reformed itself, as a national Episcopal Church, on the ground of its original independence on the See of Rome. Therefore, till our Sectaries have given up this point to the Papists, and made the Church of England legally dependent on the authority of Rome, the case of our Reformation affords no precedent to their Separation. This Bishop *Hoadley* knew; therefore he allowed the authority of the Church of Rome, and made the Reformation of this Church,

Church, a forcible Separation, or Schism, that all the Sectaries might be justified by our example. But he goes to a greater length: he maintains, that we did not reform, because the doctrines of the Church of Rome *were actually corrupt*, but because we *thought them so*; putting our Reformation on the foot of *opinion*, not of reasonable right, and actual knowledge: and opinion being once admitted as a rule of Reformation, will hold as good against us, as against the Papists: nay, it will stop no where, till it make every man a Church to himself; with such doctrines as he likes, and without any one Christian ordinance whatsoever. When we descend to reason and authority, a weak cause may soon be overthrown; but if *opinion* is to justify, the Quakers may stand their ground; and so may Socinians, Mahometans, Jews, and Heathens; because the opinions of men, from the force of custom and habit, will go with the persuasion in which they have been educated. The Papists wish to put all Reformation from their Church, on such a foot,

foot, that the principle may be ruined by its own absurdity : and in this, our Secretaries, with Bishop Hoadley for their advocate, have given them all the advantage they can desire.

Popular power is another engine which hath been turned against the Church ; that is, against the authority of God and his Ministers ; and if this is admitted, then must that be right which the people set up, whatever it may be. All unlawful authority affects to ride in upon the backs of the people : and the patriots of Pagan Rome, while they trampled upon captive Kings, and looked upon all nations as made to be their slaves, were always flattering the *people* of their own commonwealth, with the conceit of their own *Majesty*. The *Geneva* discipline went upon this principle ; and they were followed therein by our Puritans and Independents. But the Scripture is so expressly against it, that its friends were tempted to corrupt the Text of the New Testament, to give it countenance. In
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the History of the Ordaining of the seven Deacons, in the sixth Chapter of the Acts, the Text says—*whom WE may appoint over this business*—giving the appointment to the *Apostles*. But the words were altered into—*whom YE may appoint*—giving the appointment to the *people*. One of the largest and the most numerous Folio Editions of the Bible ever printed in this country, which is that of *Field* 1660, several copies of which are still to be seen, upon the Reading-desks in our Churches, has this corruption; as many others had from the years 1640 to 1660. *Field's* Edition was worked off in the time of the Usurpation, and was to have been published under the authority of the Parliament; but not coming forth till after the Restoration, the Title Page was changed, and it made its appearance *cum Privilegio*.

From this falsification of the Apostolical History, it is easy to foresee (and every young reader should be aware of it) how the English History, particularly that of

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the last century, must have suffered under the hands of the same party; what falsities and forgeries must have been propagated, to conceal the truth, to defame and blacken the best characters, and to justify the worst. Sometimes these bold experiments brought the authors of them into great embarrassment. Mr. *Baxter*, in two Editions of his *Saint's Everlasting Rest*, printed before the year 1660, instead of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, as it is in the Scripture, calls it the *Parliament of Heaven* (and, if like their own, it must have been a Parliament *without a King*) and into this Parliament he puts some of the *Regicides*, and other like *Saints*, who were then dead. But in the Editions after the Restoration, he drops them all out of Heaven again, and restores the kingdom of God to its place, in the language of the Gospel. Lord *Brook* was one of the Saints whom *Baxter* thus dis canonized: of whose remarkable end Lord *Clarendon* gives an account; Vol. II. Chap. vi. p. 114.

But

But to return to the subject of popular Election. I have an author before me, a declaimer against *Priestcraft*, who finds the right of the people in the History of the Election of *Matthias* to the Apostleship. "Matthias is elected," says he, "*to testify that ordination might be valid by the votes of the people only, without the immediate interposition of Heaven.*" He calls the Assembly of Apostles and Disciples, who were an hundred and twenty in number, *the people*; of whom we know that *eleven* were Apostles; that *seventy* more were ordained Ministers; and nothing appears, but that (the *women* excepted) all the rest of this assembly were of the Ministry likewise. But supposing them to be *the people*, how does it appear, that ordination was valid by their votes? Where is the account of this voting? The election is referred to God in the determination of a lot. — *Thou, Lord, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.* Here the immediate interposition of Heaven is applied for; but our orator says, this ordination was from the votes of the

people only, without any such interposition of Heaven *. These two examples may be sufficient to shew the wretched shifts, and bold experiments, to which men are driven in the handling of the Scripture, to uphold the Anti-christian doctrine of a Church, derived from the authority of the people.

* See the *Axe laid to the Root of Priestcraft* in four Discourses. See Disc. iv. p. 5.

A SHORT

A
SHORT VIEW
OF THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE
ARGUMENT
BETWEEN THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND THE
DISSENTERS.

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BETWEEN THE

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DISSIDENTS

SHORT VIEW, &c.

THE excellent *Hooker*, in the Preface to his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, gives us a curious and clear account of the zeal and artifice with which the first Puritans maintained and recommended their schism against the Church of England. But every member of this Church should see, within as short a compass as may be, how the same cause (allowing for the difference of times and fashions) is maintained now.

A worthy Divine distinguished himself some thirty years ago, in *Three Letters to a Gentleman dissenting from the Church of England*; which Letters were much attended to at the time, and procured the author, the notice and encouragement of
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Archbishop *Secker*. He afterwards reduced the substance of them into a small manual, addressed to a *Dissenting parishioner*, with the pious desire of *guiding him to the Church of England*; and an excellent little piece it is. But as the zeal of our Dissenters permits nothing of this kind to pass, without the appearance of an answer, it is probable they set one of their best hands upon the work of writing a short *reply* to it; that the Dissenting parishioner might *not* be guided to the Church of England. This *reply*, which was printed at *Birmingham*, (that modern mint of base money, and false doctrine) I have, with some difficulty, procured; and I shall produce, in their order, such arguments as I have found in it; from which it will be seen, how the Dissenters of the present age defend their separation.

1. They make very light of the sin of *Schism*, as a thing which has nothing frightful to *wise* people; although it be dressed up by us in a frightful form, to terrify

terrify the *ignorant*, and such as are *children in understanding*.

Such is *Schism*, when it is committed against *us*; but when it comes home to *themselves*, they have entertained a very different opinion of it, and have carried the principle of unity as high as the most zealous of the Church of England. Liberty of conscience, when it operated against themselves, was called, *curfed Toleration*, that *hideous monster of Toleration*, in a book subscribed by the Ministers of the Province of London, Dec. 14, 1647*. We are then agreed, that Schism must be of pernicious consequence, and that it is a grievous affliction to the Christian society;

* See a friendly debate between a Conformist and a Non-conformist. Edit. 3. p. 76. That the Dissenters are, to this day, of the same *intolerant spirit*, is not to be doubted; and I have had repeated demonstrations of it under my own eye, who have seen a small minority of Dissenters, though unprovoked, stir up such a furious opposition against a Church, and its Minister, that a good man, of a peaceable temper, made this reflexion upon it to his Clergyman.—‘Sir, I perceive we should not have so much as a barn to worship God in, if they could prevent it.’

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though we are not rightly agreed as to the objects of Schism. If considered in itself, it is the opposite to St. Paul's Virtue of *Charity*; as any intelligent person may see, who reads the 13th Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians as a continuation of the 12th Chapter. And if Charity is the greatest of all virtues, its contrary, which is Schism, must be the greatest of all sins; therefore, we justly pray against it in the Litany. Whether the Dissenters ever follow our example, is more than I know; though it can scarcely be expected that they should pray against, while they continue in it, and think it hath nothing frightful to *wise* people. But if we may judge of it by its fruits, (and there is no better rule) what envy and hatred, what disputings and railings, what cruelty and persecution, what rebellion and sacrilege, hath it not produced in this kingdom? and they who acted these things were so far from taking shame to themselves, that they laid all the guilt of them upon the Church, which they persecuted and plundered! We should be glad to forget these things

things, but that there are some amongst us who delight in the memory of those unhappy times, and chew all the murder and the mischief of them over again, which is the case with the author of the *Confessional*, and other writers of the same spirit. As to the corruption of doctrine, which follows upon Schism, it was so apparent to the actors in the Schism of the last century, that it forced from them, that testimony above-mentioned, against the *curfed* nature of *Toleration*. Three-score different sects, some holding monstrous and blasphemous opinions, rose out of the Presbyterians of that time. Now, to make light of all these things, as if Schism, which is a root of bitterness, *i. e.* an active principle of mischief in the mind, were but a slight offence, a mere scarecrow to *wise* people, is to deceive men, and bring their consciences and souls into a fatal snare. Nay, it is not only to deceive them, simply, but with the very deception which brought death into the world. The tempter suggested to our first parents, that they *should not surely*

die; and that their apprehensions of danger arose from the *ignorance* and *childishness* of their *understandings*.

2. They plead next, that their Schism, with respect to the Church of England, is no more than a Separation from an *human establishment*; for that the Church of England has *no foundation* but upon *the King and the Parliament*; whereas the Church of Christ is *founded upon the doctrines* taught by the Apostles.

If our Church has *no foundation* but upon *the King and Parliament*, then certainly it is not founded upon the Authority of Christ, and consequently it is no Church of Christ. But will any man say, that a national Church, being a member of the Catholic Church of Christ, ceases to be such, when adopted as a part of the constitution, and established by the civil power? Suppose it were persecuted by the civil power; and its ministers and worship were proscribed; would it therefore cease to be a Church of Christ?
certainly

Certainly not: for the Church of the Hebrews in Egypt, was still the Church of God, though the people were under a cruel edict not to serve him, and God owned it as such, and delivered it at last. Do the powers of this world unmake the Church by their reception of it, when they do not by their persecuting of it? Do its Bishops and Priests cease to be Bishops and Priests? Do its Sacraments cease to be Sacraments? Doth its discipline cease to be Christian discipline, and love its authority, because the state admits of it, and establishes it? I say, suppose they were to declare against all these things, as the Heathens and Jews did in the first ages of the Gospel, their declaration would signify nothing: because the Church, in its Priesthood and Sacraments, derives its authority only from Jesus Christ, which the persecution of the civil powers cannot reach; much less can their allowance turn it into an *human* authority, and render it of none effect. But we shall see hereafter, how all this is overthrown, by another plea which the Dissenters (forgetting

getting *this*) have made use of to defend their separation from the Church of England.

To say, that the Church of Christ is founded upon the *doctrines* taught by the Apostles, is a gross mistake. *Doctrines* can no more confer authority of office to Church ministers, than the Statute book in England can make a justice of the peace; whose power must come to him by personal deputation. A written law does nothing, till there comes an executive power, lawfully ordained, to administer and bring it to effect. Let any Dissenter shew us the text or doctrine that will make a Priest. We can soon shew him one which tells us how Priests must be made.—*No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*; who was called by an outward consecration, from a person whom God had commissioned to consecrate: and the power thus given descended by succession to his posterity. The power of *absolution* was given by Christ to the
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Christian ministry, and without this power there can be no such thing as a Church of Christ. The Priesthood had the power of absolution under the Law of Moses; and even the Priests of Heathenism were never considered as the representatives of the people, but of the God to whom they belong; to pronounce blessings, and forgive sins in his name. But the Presbyterians are so far from claiming this power to themselves, (though supposed to be in all the Priests of the world) that they mock at it in us, and call it Popery and Juggling; and a Church so rejecting a power essential to the nature of priesthood, is in a state of abjuration against its own existence.

3. They say, the Church of England hath imposed such articles of faith, as the Gospel hath not imposed; for which imposition Christ hath given no authority.

This objection extends to every Church upon earth, that requires any articles of faith, as terms of Church Communion;
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and it proves too much if it proves any thing. The Gospel, it is true, imposes nothing but *Baptism* and its *Faith in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*: all other articles are intended for the defence and security of this one in its proper extent. And such articles will be more or less, according to times and occasions, as the adversaries of the faith assault it on different sides, and with different principles of offence. The Gospel does not require that we should renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; nor set down the Apostles' Creed, as a condition of communion: and, if we had a mind to be perverse and captious, we might argue, that a man may come to Christian Baptism with his mouth shut, and not say one word for himself, because the Gospel hath not set down the form, nor specified the terms of the Baptismal Covenant; though the intention or sense of it (what we are to renounce, and what we are to believe) is clear throughout the New Testament. The Church of England hath articles expressly against Popery: But
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the Gospel hath imposed no such articles; it knew nothing of Popery; and the principle of the Dissenters would leave us defenceless against the Papists, as well as all our other enemies, and is contrary to the fundamental principle of all society, and even of nature itself. We have no occasion here to enquire, what the Articles of the Church of England are; because the objection extends to all articles whatsoever, except such as are set down in the Scripture, which sets down nothing but baptism; and is so brief in its accounts, that every true principle of the Christian Faith might be evaded, if we were to lay hold of some short expressions, and make them *exclusive*, contrary to common rules of reasoning, the plainest facts, and the nature of the case, as some have done; particularly the celebrated Mr. *Locke*, who contends, that the Christian Gospel has but one article, namely, *that Jesus Christ is the Messiah*; whereas the one great condition of Salvation, in the Gospel, is Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; therefore the great and

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fundamental article of the Gospel, is that of Faith in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

4. From the preceding article, which asserts, that the Church of England hath imposed articles which Christ hath not imposed; it is argued, that in opposing the Church of England, they oppose *an invasion of the kingly authority of Jesus Christ.*

Jesus Christ doth not act in person, but hath commissioned his Church to act for him, and hath promised to be with it, and support its authority, to the end of the world. Therefore, to argue *for* Jesus Christ *against* his Church, is to set up Jesus Christ against himself; and the like objection may be made against all the Churches in the world: which, so far as they act for their own just rights, *under* Jesus Christ, may be said to act *against* him. Every true Church is bound to assert and defend the faith it hath received: but its enemies will call this necessary defence

defence an *imposition*, and then contend, that they are free from all obligation. But with what grace doth this argument come from the party, who imposed their own *solemn league and covenant* on men's consciences in this kingdom, at the peril of their lives and fortunes, and proscribed them as *malignants* if they refused to take it; for which there certainly is neither precedent nor precept in the Gospel? How marvellously do the opinions of men change, when they argue *for themselves*, and when they argue *against us*.

5. To explain away the offence of Schism, it is farther argued, that as there were *Schisms* among the *Corinthians*, when it does not appear that there was any *separation*; so there may be a separation where there is no Schism: because Christians may still be *united in heart and affection*, though they perform the offices of religion in different places and in different ways.

The history of facts in this country gives us a different prospect of things, and indeed it is preposterous to suppose, that if we sow in Schism, we shall reap in Unity: or in other words, that if we murder and mangle the body of the Church, we shall preserve charity, which is the life and soul of it. It is true, we shall not dispute much about any thing, if we are *indifferent* to every thing: but misguided religious zeal is not of this insipid character. The ordinance of Parliament of the 11th of Aug. 1645, for *putting in execution the directory*, has these words.—“If any
 “ person or persons whatsoever, shall, at
 “ any time or times hereafter, use, or
 “ cause the aforesaid Book of Common
 “ Prayer to be used in any Church, Cha-
 “ pel, or public place of worship, or in
 “ any private place, or family, within the
 “ kingdom of England, or the dominion
 “ of Wales, or port and town of Berwick;
 “ every person so offending herein, shall,
 “ for the first offence, pay the sum of
 “ five pounds of lawful English money;
 “ for the second offence, ten pounds; and
 “ for

“for the third, shall suffer one whole
 “year’s imprisonment, without bail or
 “mainprize.” This law was one of the
 fruits of Schism; and there never was a
 law more severe and cruel. The King
 was then living, and the *private* worship
 of his family is not excepted. But these
 were days of religious madness; we know
 better now. So it is said; but I fear with
 very little truth. What would not that
 persecuting spirit do, if it had power,
 which is so conspicuous in the *Syllabus* of
Mr. Robinson’s Lectures, a *Dissenting teacher*
 at *Cambridge*? How fresh is the remem-
 brance (or ought to be) of the riots in
 London, which shook the kingdom, and
 brought us so nearly to ruin in a few days;
 all conducted by a fanatic Presbyterian,
 with a rout of forty thousand disorderly
 people at his heels? And if the principles
 of fanaticism can perform such wonders
 here, even in a man without learning,
 without parts, without morals, without
 sense: how dreadful may their effects be
 upon a future occasion! and who can tell
 how *soon* that occasion may happen?
 especially

especially as Dr. Priestley, another *Dissenting teacher*, is now threatening us with impending ruin, from himself and his party; who give us warning, that they have long been, and are now, *conveying gunpowder* under our *foundation*, to blow up the *old rotten fabric* of the Church of England? Neither is that zeal totally departed which produced the cruel edict of 1645, against the use of our Liturgy; a Dissenter (to my knowledge) having been lately heard to declare, that every Common Prayer Book in England *ought to be burned!* and this was from a person, who, abstracted from these paroxysms of religious bigotry, was of a peaceable and quiet temper! Add to this, that practice, which is almost universal with the Dissenters, of *forcing* their servants and dependants into the *worship of the Meeting-house*, however strong their affections may be to the worship of the Church by birth and education. But our Dissenting apologist assures us, Christians may still be *united in heart and affection*, though they worship God in different places: and that there

there may be separation without Schism, as there was Schism at Corinth without separation. But these smaller Schisms of the Corinthians, which did not actually separate them into different communions, were yet, according to the Apostle, very reprehensible, and of bad tendency : therefore, actual separation, being Schism in the extreme, must be more reprehensible. To suppose it less, is to contradict the reason of things ; as if it should be argued, that because we may hurt a man without killing him, therefore we may kill a man without hurting him.

6. However, if there should be any Schism betwixt the Church of England and the Dissenters, they say the *guilt* of it is with the Church, who will not *yield to weak brethren in things which are confessed to be indifferent and of small moment.*

With what propriety can things of *small moment* be introduced, as objections to our Communion, after it has been asserted, that the Church of England is

no Church of Christ? If that objection be good, all things of *small moment* are superfluous. For who can be obliged, or who indeed will consent, to be a member of a Church, which is no Church of Christ? "Leave things indifferent (saith this reply) as they are in their own nature, and as Christ hath left them, and the separation is over." So then, if these indifferent things were removed, the Dissenters would communicate with a Church, which is no Church of Christ! Who can believe this? Is it not much more probable, that the Dissenters do not mean to throw up the separation for any concessions that can be made by a Church, which, in their opinion, is itself separated from the Communion of Jesus Christ? These objections are so inconsistent, that they leave small hopes of the possibility of a reconciliation. For if all these small things were removed, still there will remain the insuperable (and we trust, uncharitable and groundless) objection, that the Church of England is no Church of Christ; and that Dissenters cannot upon any principle communicate

municate with a Church, which they think to be excommunicate. The case between us is very bad under this representation of it; but it becomes, if possible, more hopeless in what follows.

7. For the Reply tells us, that the Dissenters do not stand out for the *value* of the things required, which are matters of *indifference*; but stand up in defence of that *liberty*, wherewith Christ hath made them free, and will not be brought into bondage.

Do they think then, that Christ hath given them *liberty* to break the peace of the Church, for matters *indifferent*? That is, to destroy peace, essential to salvation; to save liberty, the creature of human pride? Another apologist of the Dissenters, the author of *The independent Whig*, puts this matter out of question; and affirms without reserve, that *Schism* is so necessary to the preservation of *liberty*, that there can be *no Liberty without Schism*. What would the Christian world be, if

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this principle were universally followed? No two of us could consent together; because the one must lose his *liberty*, till he goes off into *Schism*; so it would break all Christian societies into individuals. *Liberty* and *bondage* are words of strange significations in this land, which it would be tedious to display. Only let us distinguish, that there is no bondage in dutiful submission; for that is the *service of God* which is *perfect freedom*: nor any liberty in unreasonable disobedience; for that is the bondage of Satan, who works in the children of disobedience, and puts them to a great deal of trouble; making them restless and impatient, and leading them such a wearisome life, that, if it were not called liberty, they would wish themselves out of the world.

8. The Church of England is accused of taking away the Bread and the Cup, unless people will receive kneeling; and Christ hath not made kneeling a necessary term of Communion.

nor

Nor is it necessary with us; because we administer the Sacrament to the sick or the infirm, either sitting, kneeling, or lying. Kneeling is proper to an act of devotion; such the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is now, and not a social act of eating, as at the Passover, when it was first instituted. Kneeling may admit of a bad construction, because the Papists kneel and worship the Host: but Charity will give it a good construction, and then all the difficulty is over. However, let us call it an *imposition*: yet why should the enjoining of it be objected to by the very people, who imposed on all that took their solemn league and covenant, the posture of *standing*, with the ceremony of *lifting up the right hand bare*? But, what is still more to the purpose, one of their apologists assures us, they make no scruple of giving their Sacrament to all those who chuse to kneel in a Meeting-house*.

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* " In some of our Churches, there are some who receive *standing*, some *kneeling*.—Nor is there, I believe amongst

Therefore it is not the *thing*, (though that is sometimes highly exclaimed against) but the *enjoining* of the thing that renders it offensive : and it appears from this case, that Dissenters will do that to please themselves, which they will not do to please God ; who hath enjoined us all to be at peace with one another, and to agree in his worship.

Sponsors in Baptism, and the signature of the Cross, are objected to. But the first is only a prudent provision, as a farther security for the child, if the parents should die, or be of such characters as renders them unfit for sponsors ; which the child cannot help. The signature of the Cross can give no offence (as one should think) to any person who delights in the memory of the Cross itself. The purest ages of the Church used it on all

amongst our ministers, one in five hundred, who would refuse to give the Sacrament either standing or kneeling, to any one who thought either of these the fittest posture of receiving." *Dissenting Gentleman's Answer* to the Rev. Mr. White's Three Letters. P. 21.

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occasions, particularly in exorcisms, which were antiently a part of Baptism; and there are some pretty clear intimations in the Scripture for the use of some signature on the forehead; and the first of all signatures is that of the Cross. For motives of worldly traffick, the Dutch, instead of preferring it to a place in their foreheads, trample it under their feet: and our Dissenters reject it from an affection to their Schism. If the Papists are superabundant and superstitious in the use of the Cross, what is that to us? If they repeat the Lord's Prayer twenty times in an hour, are we not to repeat it at all *?

9. It is farther objected to our Church, that the people have a right, an *unalienable* right, to chuse their own ministers; which with us they are not permitted to do.

* See the use of the Signature of the Cross in Baptism, fully and learnedly vindicated in *Bennet's* Abridgment of the *London Cases*, Chap. vi.

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As for the patriotic term *unalienable*, it is applied to the rights of *nature*, which are *unalienable* because they are *inherent*. But here, it can only mean, that the Dissenters claim it, and are resolved not to part with it. On this part of the subject, I must lament with tears in my eyes, the great abuses in the Church of England, in respect to patronage and admission into Church-livings. But in bad times, no regulations are sufficient to secure us from corruption; and even the very means appointed to *keep out* bad men, will *let them in*: for there are times, when persons of no conscience or character may act *with impunity*; and the worst of men are the most ready to play with all religious securities. That this case would be mended if the choice of ministers were always with the people, is by no means clear. For nothing is so common as for people to be divided in interests and affections on very unworthy motives; and thence many great and scandalous disturbances arise; and a parish is so divided into parties, that perhaps they do not
 come

come into humour again for some years. Besides; suppose a *Socinian* should have got possession of a pulpit, and preached the people (or a *few* of the most *active*, *noisy* and *cunning*, who overbear all the rest) into Herefy: whom would they chuse, but a Socinian, at the next vacancy? And would it not be much better that an Orthodox minister should be put upon them? If the people have this right, then all the people have it; and consequently, a Socinian congregation have a right to chuse a Socinian minister. How the Scripture hath been handled, as to this affair of popular election, was noted in the Postscript to the *Essay on the Church*.

10. Though the Dissenters have no ministry by *Succeſſion*, they make light of this defect, and think they are as well off as we are, because they say, our *right of ordaining* came down to us through the channel of Popery.

Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in a Church, were no invention of Popery,
nor

nor is our succession any more affected by Popery, than the Apostles' Creed, which is also *come down to us through the channel of Popery*; and so is *Canon of the Scripture* itself: yet we take the old Creed and the old Scriptures, and think them as good as ever. The Church of Rome is under such an opprobrium with Protestants, that it is a convenient bugbear, brought forward upon all occasions by those who want better argument, to frighten us out of our Church principles, and cover the weakness of their own innovations. But the succession of Church offices is no more affected by the errors of Popery, than a man's pedigree is affected by his bodily distemper, or the distempers of his parents; and if the man, by alteratives and restoratives, is cured with the blessing of God, he returns to the state of his purer ancestors of a remote generation. A self-originated upstart, who has been railing at him for things past, in which he had no share, may take his name, and claim his inheritance; but when his title comes

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to be examined, the true right will appear, and justice will take place.

If we trace the pedigree of the Church of England far enough backwards, we find a Christian Church of the Episcopal form in Britain, with an independent right and authority of its own, before *Austin* set his foot in the country, as the messenger of *Rome*. At the Reformation, this Church did but return to its original rights, with an Episcopacy independent of the Pope, and enjoyed it for some years, with the general approbation of the people, and there was no such thing as a Presbyterian in the nation. It was approved and congratulated for its felicity by the reformed of other countries: and even *Calvin* and *Beza*, then little thought that they should have any followers so *mad*, (I use their own word) as to reject such an Episcopacy as ours, which had freed itself from the usurpation of the Papacy. *Calvin*, in his Epistle to Cardinal *Sadolet*, said of those who should reject such an hierarchy, that he should think them,

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nullo non anathemate dignos, i. e. "that no curse could be too bad for them." Beza would not believe that any could reject the order of Bishops in a reformed Church. *If there be such*, said he, *God forbid that any man in his wits should assent to the madness of those men* *. And in the same book †, speaking of the hierarchy of England and her Bishops, he says, *Let her enjoy that singular blessing of God, which I wish may be perpetual to her*. Such at that time were the sentiments of Beza and Calvin; who afterwards found it convenient to change their style; and, when the war was carried on against Episcopacy itself, the expurgatorial authority of their editors in later editions expunged these charitable attestations out of their works; which hath a very guilty appearance.

II. The Dissenters plead, that what is called the Act of Toleration, has given a

* *Ad Traët. de Ministr. Evang. ab Hadr. Sarav. Edit. Belgo. c. i.*

† Cap. 18.

sanction to their separation, and taken away the sin of it. They are "not chargeable with Schism, since they who have the *power of continuing or altering our Church at their pleasure, have given them liberty to withdraw, and have taken their places of worship under their protection as well as ours.*"

If I understand this plea right, it is a mill-stone about the neck of all the rest; because it shews, that the apologist of the Dissenters hath argued without principles, and so hath fallen into a manifest contradiction. He began with mocking at the Church of England, as having no *foundation* but upon *the King and Parliament*: or, as another Dissenter hath expressed it, in the like insulting strain, as "*built upon the foundation of the Lords and Commons, the King himself being the chief corner stone.*" And they have argued, that it even ceases to be a Church of Christ, because it acts under the allowance of the civil power. Yet in their own case, the King and Parliament, by an act of Grace,

can make Schism to be no Schism! The protection we have from the civil government is cast in our teeth, as a disadvantage, which extends even to the *unchurching* of us, and throwing us out of the kingdom of Christ; but the same thing (supposing them to have it) takes away from them the guilt of their separation! And thus they give to the King and Parliament, the privilege of God himself, who only can forgive sin: which is more than we ever allowed them.

It is a very false suggestion, that our civil government can alter the Church *at their pleasure*. There is, indeed, a sense, in which it may be said, that a man has *power* to do whatever he can do by *force* and violence: but still there is an essential difference between the power of force and the power of *right* and *authority*. The Church of England never can be altered *legally*, without the consent and act of the *Convocation*, who are a part of the constitution: and if it were otherwise done, it must be done by an act of violence, against the

the rights of Englishmen; for Englishmen do not lose their rights by being Christians and Churchmen; as their enemies are inclined to have it. There can be no power of authority in laymen to make or unmake a Church, any more than there can be a power in the Church to make or unmake the civil constitution; and nothing can confound these powers but an overbearing principle of infidelity; from which may God deliver us; who hath promised that the gates of Hell (the judicial power of the adversaries of Jesus Christ) shall not prevail against us. Suppose the civil power should make an act, that the King shall ordain Priests, or that Priests shall not baptize children, nor consecrate the Sacrament; what would such an act signify? Therefore, they have not the power to alter the Church *at their pleasure*; for this might be their pleasure, if their wits, or the grace of God were to forsake them. Such a power, if it were claimed, was never exercised even by Heathen persecutors. However, the Dissenters do not seem unwilling that such a tyrann-

tyrannical power should be exercised, and appear to relish the idea of it, if it be but turned against the Church of England. No one *spiritual* act can be exercised, nor is it claimed by the civil power in this country; which can neither baptize, nor ordain, nor absolve, nor consecrate, nor excommunicate; although the Dissenters, in the heat of their zeal, have given the state a spiritual power, and even more, over us, and themselves too. But the state can say, who shall or shall not partake of temporalities: and this very state will say, some more, some less, as long as the Church accepts of their protection, and enjoys a legal maintenance and support under them. Worldly politics in such a case will be sure to interfere, and abuses will arise. Churchmen will be apt to accommodate themselves to the views and inclinations of the state, or some of the acting members of the state, who are their friends: their doctrines will change with the times; their consciences will become too flexible and easy, and the people whom they teach will be in danger from them.

them. There is no convenience in this world without its inconvenience. When the state was schismatical in the days of the grand usurpation, the Church of that time could find no such sin as *sacrilege* in the Scripture, for the fear of giving offence to their patrons, who were deep in the guilt of it: and the *Assembly of Divines* (as it was remarked long ago by Bp. *Patrick*) avoided all mention of it in their *Annotations*.

12. The Dissenters hold themselves blameless, because many persons of the Church of England, and some of great and popular character, have justified and even applauded their separation.

I find great stress laid upon this circumstance, which is blazoned out with pompous words and splendid quotations, as well of what hath been *spoken* (or so reported) as written. But the fear or favour of men, especially of men too attentive to the interests of this world (as some of their friends have certainly been) is a very unsound bottom for the Dissenters to rest upon :

upon: and so they esteem it themselves, when it is on our side. But if any false brethren amongst us take part with them, all such are *excellent men, ornaments of the establishment*, and of unanswerable authority. Sometimes the Dissenters are all for the Scripture; Jesus Christ is their only King; and to him they appeal for the rectitude of their proceedings: but if they find a flatterer amongst us, they make the most of him: and some such are always to be found; for all are not Israel that are of Israel; and it doth not follow, that a man must be true to the Church of England, because it hath introduced him to a seat in the House of Lords. Temporal considerations bring some men into the Church, whose hearts and affections never were, nor ever will be with it. Of such no honest man can approve; and therefore the approbation of such, with all their testimonies and certificates, is but of little value at last. Bishop *Hoadley* was of this character: a Socinian in principle: who, while he was celebrated by the enemies of the Church of England, (and perhaps

perhaps assisted toward his advancement) for having banished all *Mitres* and *Lordships*, and *Spiritual Courts*, out of the *Kingdom of Christ*, was, himself, an answer to every thing he had written; who scrupled not to adorn himself with a Mitre and a Lordship in one of the first preferments in this Church; while he was a greater favourer of those who were out of it, than of those who were in it; unless they were in it upon his own principles,

Amongst other bright ornaments of the Church, who applaud the separation of the Dissenters, the authors of the *Free and Candid Disquisitions* are brought in. These are not only tender to the Dissenters, but they rather think we shall never do well without them; that they are necessary to *preserve the virtue of the nation*; to save our *religious liberty*; to prevent the return of *slavery*; and to serve as a check, lest we should cast *a favourable aspect toward Rome*. These things are fairly said, but not truly; and if we consider a little

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farther from whence they came, little honour will accrue to the Dissenters from the Testimony of these authors. For it is by no means clear that they were *members of our own Church*, though they most solemnly and repeatedly professed themselves so to be in their work. It was suspected very early, that they were not such as they called themselves, but enemies under the disguise of friends. Of this their work itself carries some internal marks, which seem to have escaped them unawares.—*Ficta cito ad Naturam reciderint suam.* The author of *Free and impartial Considerations on the Free and candid Disquisitions*, pressed them with this (Anno 1751) and with great appearance of reason. He told them farther, “It begins now to be reported, and I partly believe it, that an eminent Dissenter, well known by his writings, has had a hand more or less in the *Disquisitions* *.” But, some few years after, in 1758, when this secret had been searched a little farther, or had transpired of itself, I find an author, and

* Page 59.

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I believe, a very honest one, asserting in the plainest terms, that those authors were actually Dissenters; and taxing the party very roundly with their prevarication, in these words: "Amidst the greatest indulgence, and in open defiance of the laws, they impugned and libelled our Liturgy, and our Constitution—without the least proof or foundation: they charged our Liturgy with all the defects, with all the faults, improprieties, and corruptions, which had been suggested by Papists, Heretics, Enthusiasts, and the most inveterate enemies of our constitution. And for fear the people should say, that an enemy had done this, they, by the most solemn and repeated insinuations, declared themselves to be *true and dutiful sons of the established Church**." If, after such professions, these writers were Dissenters; their Disquisitions exhibit such a scene of treachery, prevarication, self-adulation, and ingratitude, to the government *under* which, and the established Church *with*

* Case of the Royal Martyr considered with candour,
P. 333, 334.

which they live, as is scarcely to be paralleled in history.

On this supposition, all the fine things those authors thought fit to say of the Dissenters, and their virtues, and the nature and merits of their separation, are of no authority; for, that Dissenters should praise Dissenters, is nothing wonderful; but, if Dissenters did this, under the name of *true and dutiful sons of the Church*, then such praise is against them in every word of it. What sort of principles they must be, which can reconcile men's consciences to such Jesuitical frauds and disguises, they who practice them are bound to consider.

If the Dissenters think they can justify their separation by the *praise of men*; let them proceed fairly, and take it, such as it is, *all together*. They should remember, and estimate properly, how much of it comes from the bench of our Bishops, and how much from the seat of the scornful: how universally they are befriended

friended and admired by Deists, Free-thinkers, Socinian Philosophers, and Loose-livers; who delighting to see the Church opposed, and Christian people divided, are exactly of the same opinion with some of those great ornaments of the establishment of whose testimony our apologist hath so loudly boasted. “*I heartily thank God,*” says the author of *The Independent Whig*, “*that we have Dissenters, and I hope we shall never be without them* *.”

13. The last and the most general argument on which the Dissenters depend; and which, if it were just, would render all other arguments superfluous, is this; that all men *have a right to judge and chuse for themselves in matters of Religion.*

This is an extensive principle, which justifies all sects, and supersedes all insti-

* Vol. iii. p. 223.

tutions and sacraments whatsoever. It also shews the Dissenters of this day, who have recourse to it, to be quite a different class of men, from the *Puritans* in the days of *Elizabeth*; for here they extend their claims from Schism up to Heresy, and beyond it, even into the privileges and immunities of infidelity itself. The Puritans formerly judged against us in our discipline; but the Dissenters, and their friends, now judge against us in our doctrines. For, thus saith the author of the *Independent Whig*, another apologist of the Dissenters.—“No man ought to pay any submission to that *doctrine* or discipline which he *does not like* :” and the war, which was once carried on against *Pre-lacy* and *Ceremonies*, is now turned against *Articles* and *Creeds*.

If the Dissenters at large have this right of chusing what they *like*, and rejecting what they *dislike*; then the *Quakers* have it: and why not the *Jews* and the *Mahometans*? For, I desire to know, what there

there is betwixt us and them, but *matters of Religion?*

As to this affair of *chusing*, especially in *matters of Religion*, there are strange examples of human perverseness and wickedness. How often did the people *chuse new Gods?* *Herefy* is so called, because it is a doctrine which a man doth not *receive* but *chuse* for himself; and if his choice is of *right*, there can be no such thing as *Herefy* in the world. But *Herefy* is reckoned among the *works of the flesh*; and they that *heap up teachers to themselves*, are said to do it *of their own lusts*. Thus every case becomes desperate: for *lust*, being an irrational, brutal principle, hears no reason; and nothing but disorder and confusion can follow, when this principle takes the lead in religion. When men *took wives of such as they chose*, and had no rule but this rule of choice; the earth was soon *filled with violence*: and if men may take what they *chuse* in Religion, sects and divisions, strife and envying,

ing, rebellion and sacrilege, without end,
 must be the consequence; and so it is
 already recorded in the annals of this
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P O S T S C R I P T.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST SEPARATION OF THE DISSENTERS FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THE preceding short View of the Argument betwixt the Church and the Dissenters, having brought the authors of *Free and Candid Disquisitions on the Liturgy of the Church of England*, under our consideration ; I cannot help mentioning on this occasion, that I have a Manuscript in my possession of seventy-two sheets, containing Remarks on that work, written immediately after its publication, by one of the first Scholars, and best Divines of this century.

The public never did, and probably never will, receive any information from these papers ; but to me they have been entertaining and instructive. In one

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of the Author's Notes upon a large Quotation from the Epistles of St. *Cyprian*, I find the following account of the rise and progress of the Schism, which hath troubled the state of the Church, more or less, ever since the Reformation; and as this little work may fall into the hands of some readers, who never heard, whether our Dissenters originally divided *from us*, or we *from them*; it may be useful to shew how the case stands. The fact is this; they *went out from us*, after the full establishment of this Church.

For, in the year 1548, 2 Ed. 6. The *Archbishop* of *Canterbury*, and twelve of the other principal *Bishops* and *Divines*, joined in a *Committee*, drew up the *Form of celebrating the Lord's Supper*; and, after that, of the rest of the *Common Prayer*; chiefly from the best *primitive formularies* of *Public Prayer*, they could find; which was soon after confirmed by *Authority of Parliament*, with this *Testimony* subjoined, viz. that *None could doubt, but*

but that the authors were inspired, and assisted therein, by the Holy Ghost. At the same time, (as Nichols, in his *Defensio Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, observes) it was the peculiar happiness of our Reformation, that as it had been established by the concurrent Authority of the Church and State, so we enjoyed the most perfect agreement and unanimity of all orders of men among us; the very name of those swarms of *Sectarists* (the filthy pollutions whereof have, since, infected so far, and wide) being then not so much as heard of in our land. Neither did any one, either at home or abroad, (the envy, ill-nature, and heterodoxy of Calvin, only excepted) charge us, in the least, with any remains of *Popish* leaven, as mixt with our *services* and *orders*, or any thing that looked that way: but all men honoured our Church, as the most Holy Mother of the people of God committed to her, as well as the most strenuous opposer of *Antichrist*, and the chief bulwark of the Reformation. And so matters continued; not a dog moving

his tongue, or sowing the least seed of *Schism*, or *Dissent*, to corrupt her. Till under the Persecution in Queen Mary's time, when, many flying (as it was to be expected) into the Protestant States abroad, there settled themselves into little *Chapels*, or *Churches*, by permission of the *Magistrates*, according to the Order of the *Common Prayer*, and *Service of the Church of England*. Only, at Frankfort, one Fox, a man of a turbulent innovating spirit, with others associated to him, were drawn into fondness for Calvin's Plan, (*schismatical*, as it was, from all *Christian Churches since the Apostles*) and made themselves a new farrago of *Public Prayers*, as opposite to the *English*, and consequently to those of all the *Primitive Churches*, as they could devise: which, upon Queen Mary's death, they brought home with them; and, in preaching and writing, endeavoured to force, or palm upon the people; but yet, without any direct, and open *Schism*: till one Cartwright, in a Theological Disputation held

held at *Cambridge* before the Queen, [Elizabeth] being rebuked by her for his unreasonable and turbulent manner of conducting himself in it, thereupon went off, full fraught with *spleen* and *spite*, to *Calvin*: from whence returning, with *new ulcers* added to his *old sores*, and causing fresh disturbances, he was expelled his College, and deprived of the *Margaret-Professorship*, by Dr. *Whitgift*, who was head of the same College [Trinity] and *Vice-Chancellor* of the *University*. Whereupon, with others of his own *Calvinistical cast*, he began to set up his *Novo-puritanical Schism*, with *classes*, *conventicles*, &c. in avowed contempt, and rebellion against the *Church*. The smoking brands of which fire of Schism being blown up by the tainted breath of his followers, broke out, in half an age, into a flame that once set three kingdoms into a blaze, brought one of the best of Kings to the *block*, extirpated *Episcopacy*, and the *Peerage*, so as without the visible interposition of Providence, there appeared no more hopes of
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their restoration for ever. Neither are the *coals* of the *old brands* yet quenched, but they burn still under the embers of *sedition*, wherewith they are raked up, and threaten, yet, new and worse *fires*, perhaps to the *civil*, but certainly to the *religious state* of things among us; which God avert!"

This good man did not live to see the dismembering of the British empire, by the separation of the American Colonies, begun and carried on by the same party both here and there, to the loss of so many thousand lives, and the oppressing of the people with new and endless burthens of taxes. So notorious was the case, that even the gentlemen of the army, who had an opportunity of making proper observations, and were properly disposed to make them, brought home this report with them to the Mother country, that if the Church of England had but obtained that timely support in the Colonies, for which it had so often
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petitioned, the American rebellion had never happened: and if this government shall be as remiss toward itself, in the Mother country, as it has been towards the Colonies, the same evils will soon break out at home.

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